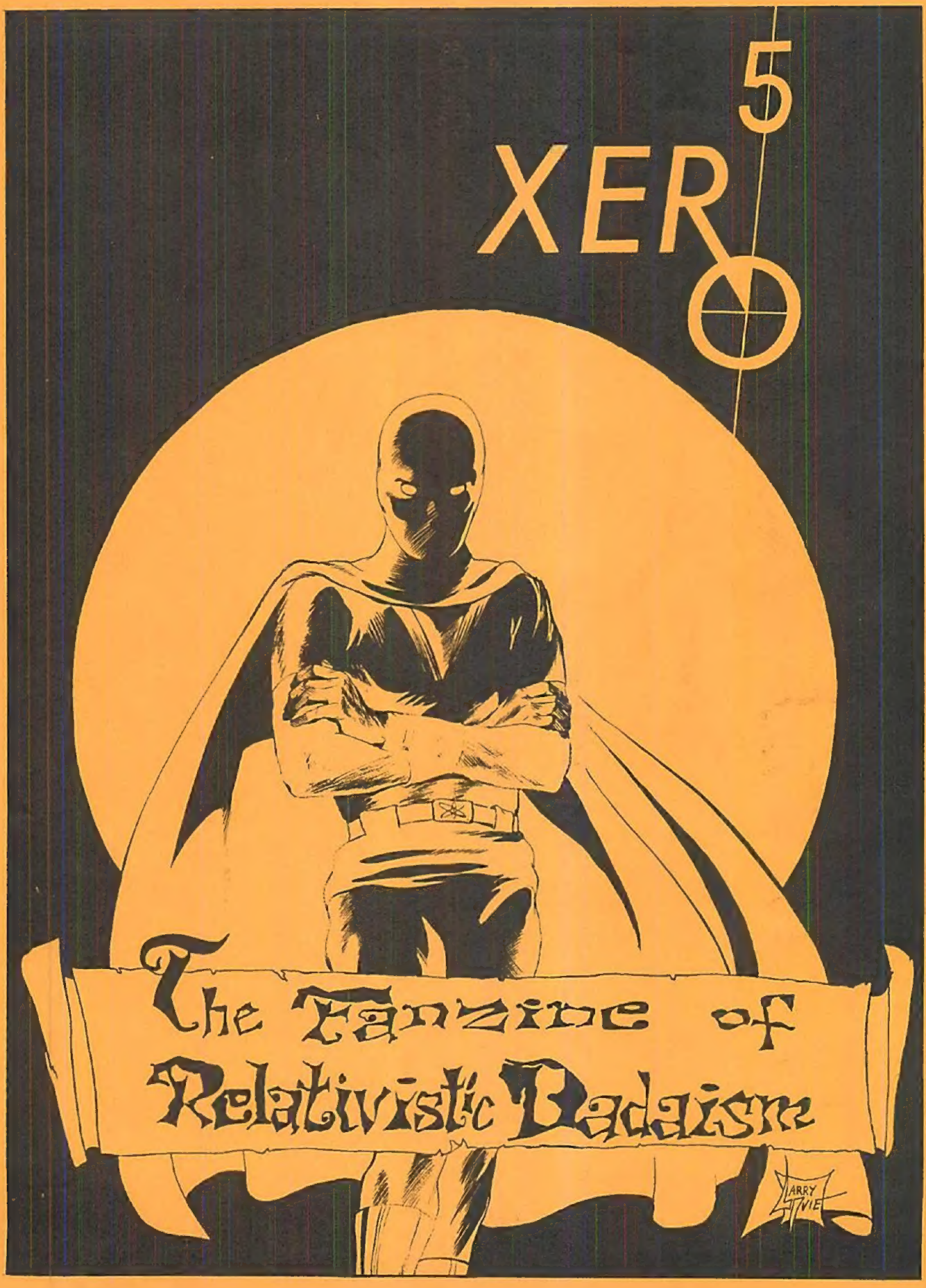
XERO 5



XERO

5

july 1961

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Xero comes from Pat and Dick Lupoff, 215 E. 73rd Street, New York 21, New York--for contributions, trades, letters of comment. Bhob Stewart is art editor.

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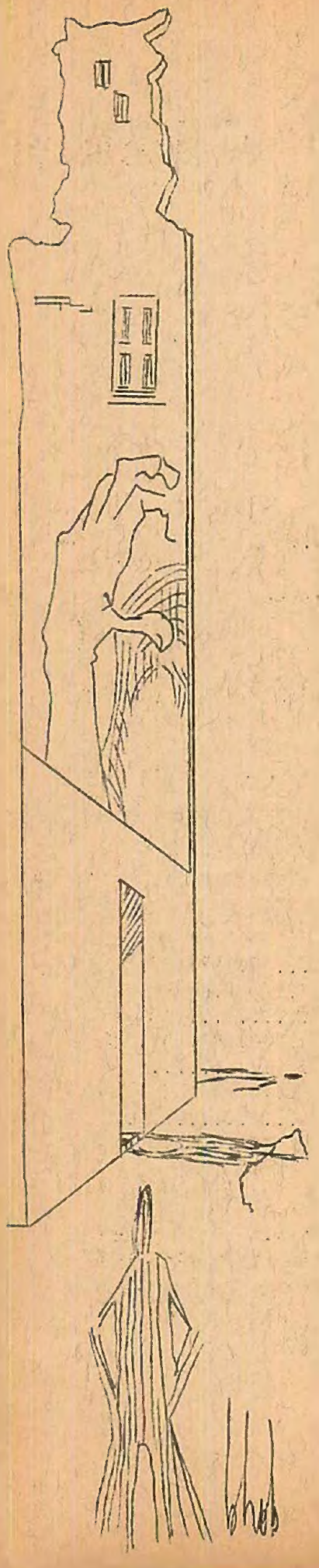


OLD-FASHIONED EDITORIAL

Wheeeee! Ain't this a jazzy job of duping! Or is it? Long before you get to see this issue of XERO I'll know whether the reproduction is good or not, of course. I'll know it as soon as I start cranking. But today (Saturday, June 10, 1961; let history so record) as I write this editorial I have no idea whether XERO 5 will come out well or not. Y'see, it's like this:

Way back in the early days of the world -- June, 1960, to be exact -- Pat and I and Walter Breen, bhoy FANAC editor, put out a little four-page one shot called The RUMBLE. None of us having a mimeo, we had the thing run off on a quasi-commercial basis by QWERTYUIOPress's Gestetner. It only cost a couple of bucks, and that was fine.

A few months later XERO 1 appeared and again it was a QWERTY job. "Impeccable," the reviewers said. "Expensive," we said. Not that the QWERTY rates are exhorbitant. On the contrary, they're only about half of standard rates for commercial mimeography. But 38 pages time 100 copies came to something like $20, a not-inconsiderable amount.

The second issue of XERO was 50 pages. Time 100 copies, that's a nice sum also, and the third issue -- again 50 pages but this time 125 copies -- ahh, you begin to see what's happening.

Just about the time XERO 4 -- 75 pages counting supplements and 150 copies -- was due, a slow light began to dawn in my microcephalum. It was about time XERO got a mimeo of its own. The initial cost might be high, but at least it would eliminate the constant expense that quasi-commercial mimeography entails.

Simultaneously, word reached us via certain circuitous channels that Damon Knight was <u>giving away</u> a mimeo. He was giving it, in fact, to Larry Shaw, although it had to be picked up at Milford. Ajay Budrys volunteered to transport the Giant Machine to Staten Island, and, with only a brief delay due to automotive difficulties, the mimeo arrived at the Shaws'. It was an ancient AB Dick 90, decrepit, balky, and in need of repair, but it got working and XERO 4 was run on it. That saved about $50 in mimeo costs, but the result was also somewhat less than ideal.

Well, going on the basis of anticipated savings (a dangerous procedure, yes) Pat and I decided to go ahead and buy a duper all our own. I mean, what the hell, we pooled our mutual anniversay-present money at the Pittcon to buy a Paul original (#%&"%; Chris Moskowitz bid it up an extra $10 after Forry Ackerman dropped out of the bidding); why not a duper?

Larry Shaw and I looked at a Rex Rotary M2, decided that this was the best for less than a fortune, and I was about to hock Pat's diamonds to buy it when T.E. White, Mr. Q'Press himself, asked if we had rejected the Rex Rotary D series. "D series? What the hell is that?"

"That's their heavy-duty line."

"Didn't see any in the showroom where we saw the Mseries."

"They're marketed separately."

So, up I ran to the other Rex Rotary Company, and emerged an hour later carrying (well, at least symbolically carrying, actually they delivered it) a rebuilt Rex Rotary D270H. Phew! Worse than the computer business. And I know less about it.

It seems to be a great machine -- screen process, paste ink, perfect registration, a good paper feed (Larry Shaw and I hand-fed about 8000 ((actually and literally)) sheets of paper on XERO 4 before the feed was repaired) -- and the price was about the same as that of the M2. Well, actually a little more, but with no federal excise tax it works out.

Now all that remains to be seen is the results.

A few words about the contents of this:

You may recognize the Blish piece as the same one that appeared in the June F&SF. The XERO version is the original; it was written for us, then "borrowed back" for F&SF. I had decided not to reprint it until I saw the changes in the F&SF version. Thank you, Mr. Mills, for your kind permission to reprint. I think it will be worth your reading, dear reader, especially if you have read the F&SF version. It was, to speak kindly, somewhat expurgated.

The poems are the first XERO has ever published, and are presented on a rather tentative basis. You may recall the warning in the first issue that since most fan poetry is so bad, we would probably publish little if any. I think this poetry more than meets fan standards, but opinions are particularly solicited.... Bhob Stewart, by the way, recommends that you try reading the Ebert stuff aloud. Cave.

Don't worry, Don Thompson, All in Color has not been dropped. It will be resumed in XERO 6 with either the Seven Soldiers of Victory, Planet Comics by Dick Ellington, or Wonder Woman by Larry Ivie and Lee Anne Tremper.

And speaking of series, The Fallen Mighty, inspirer of AICFAD, has been reinstated, even if only for one shot, in YANDRO 100. Don't miss it if you can.

A curious book you might look into is Ballantine's England Under Hitler, by Comer Clarke. A perfect example of the "borderline book," this is a blend of science-fiction, research project, speculative non-fiction, and straight reporting. It tends to read a bit like a Sunday supplement; this may be due to the fact that Comer Clarke is a Sunday supplement writer.

The theme is not new. It's the old "what if" technique applied to the second World War. It's been done at least twice before that I know of, possibly more than that. Cyril Kornbluth's "Two Dooms" appeared first, in the late VENTURE. It was a beautifully wrought picture of the America that would have come to be long after an Axis victory, occupied in its western half by Japanese and in the East by Germans. The two dooms of the title, however, are not these -- these two are only one doom; the other is the world in which we live today.

Second to try this gambit (on further thought he may have preceded Kornbluth, but second to appear in this country, anyway) was Sarban. His The Sound of His Horn (also Ballantine) is slow starting and sadly fragmentary, but it paints Germany several centuries after an Axis victory in World War II chillingly.

Clarke's book is set in the past...specifically, in the early-to-mid-forties, assuming that Germany had invaded and conquered the British Isles. It's and curious and not satisfying book, but intriguing and certainly worth 35¢.

The final Hugo ballots are out, and it's a pretty good slate we have to pick from this year. Just for fun, here's how I'm going to vote:

Best novel: Rogue Moon, with regrets to Canticle.

Best short: Abstain -- I've only read Need and Open to Me, neither of which deserves a Hugo.

Best prozine: AMAZING. After all, Campbell's sickness deserves sympathy but not prizes, and F&SF's deterioration has been appalling.

Best artist: Emsh. Freas has left us, Finlay is not doing his best, and Hunter's work is unmoving.

Best Drama: The Time Machine.

Best fanzine: Five excellent candidates. "Who Killed SF" certainly deserves a special award, but not this Hugo -- it is not a fanzine. For best long-sustained performance, YANDRO.

N.B.: These are not predictions.

= = = =

contention

what would
the
martians think
of a
dog

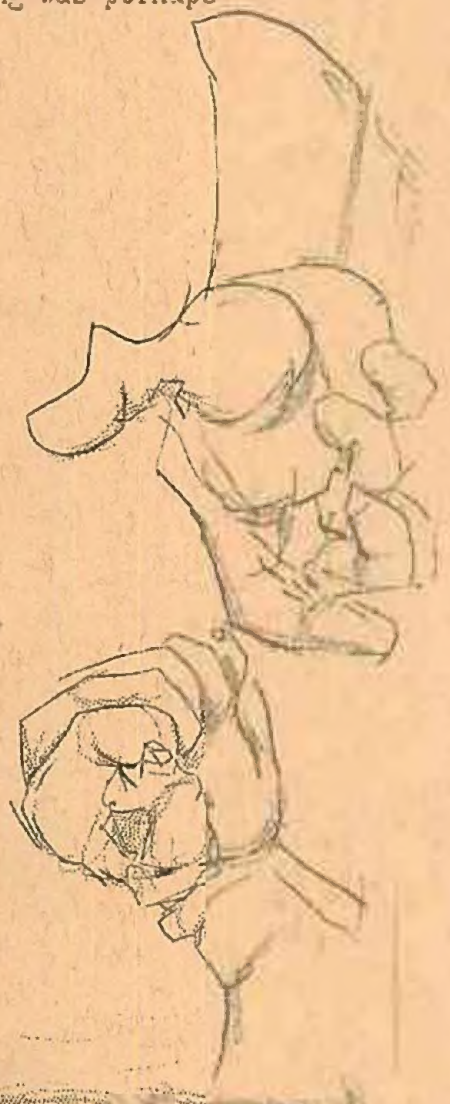
his leg
lifting

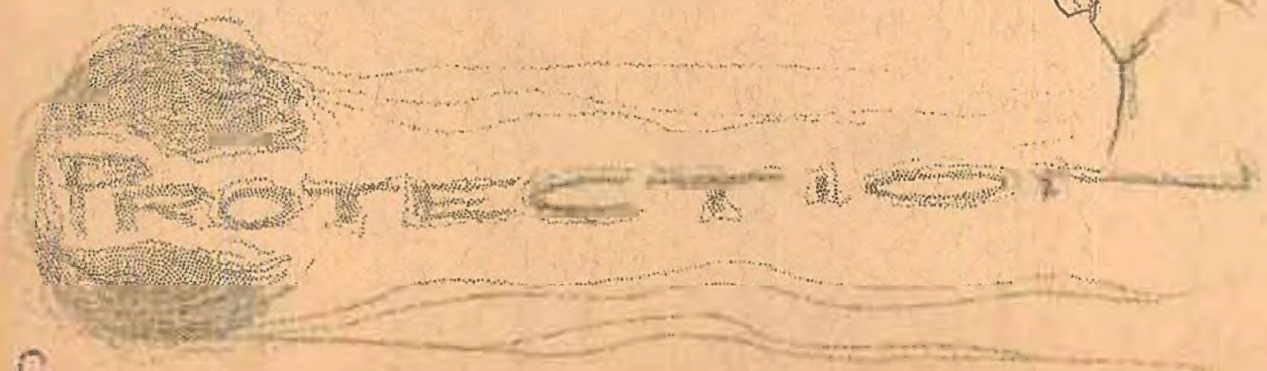
on mars? not
much, i
should
t h i n k
...un-
less he
(happened)
to be a
girl.

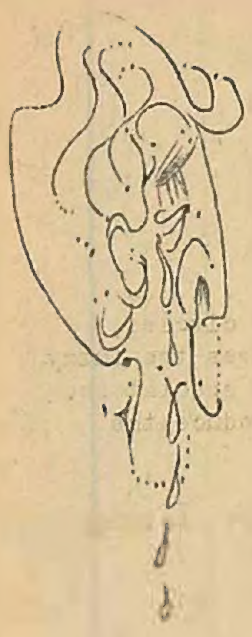
- rog ebert

This whole controversy, said a friend of mine the Tuesday after it came out in Herald, reminds me of once when four of us ran out to the edge of town early one morning planning to get a head start and go out West somewhere hoping to buy our own ranch, or for an alternative to get money in a bank holdup and rule the town by sheer force of superior weapons or something. Yes, I remember something like it happening when I was that age, Ed chuckled. The new junior high to the west of town had just actually been completed, and we thought we'd go prowling through the street behind it and sneak through a back window. To run across the back way into that building was perhaps the hardest thing I ever did, but it was a thing we all wanted to do so badly--you could taste it in your mouth--that we didn't even stop to think about the consequences. Yes, said the conductor coming up the aisle, perhaps you did think it was funny--but what destruction did you cause to the taxpayer's--his very word!--property? Maybe if some of these hoodlums we read about in the paper--was it in this morning?--thought before acting, there perhaps would be less delinquency in this town. We were forced--I was forced, and I guess my friend was too--into somehow nodding agreement. It tells you a lot about the way life has changed since that long-ago day that my friend and I still remember so clearly we would not want to let it now be forever and ever criminal (we did not tell this to the conductor).

-rog ebert







Next-to-last Statement

when i was thirteen and onehalf years old (this
is a true story) i
sent tencents to robert coulson for
a copy of yandro (now
i might be expected to
make some sort of statement on this,
or to assemble some sort of
case
on how important this was to my
future
in fandom) (my future in
fandom), but
although that seems to be
protocol, or at
least habit,
i wonder, i wonder...
if these six years have
been important.
will you remember me (or
forget me)
or (still
more important,
much
more important) will
i remember you?
has it been meaningful
that i
wrote and rhymed
and pubbed
and loced and--
on that summer day of the illinois state fair--
talked for an afternoon with
wilson (bob) tucker?
does it mean, does
it mean that...
or is it
too early to...or am
i qualified to
say that...or, or...no!
i cannot quit yet.
ted white has not written me (walt
willis did) and since
i have vowed not to quit until
ted
does (to get the last word in
spite) i cannot quit yet.
when i was thirteen and onehalf years old (this
is a true story) i
sent a postcard to kent moomaw and he
(typed upon the back of a 3x5 file card)
answered that i would soon. i
never did. (how
will i tell when ted
white quits,
though?)

-rog ebert

HARRY WARNER:

First Fandom institutes a search for movies of ancient fan clambakes. Eastman Kodak introduces a new type of Kodachrome. Silents Please becomes a quite popular television program despite lack of introductory fanfare and a poor timeslot. Floodlights are banned at a convention business session because moviemakers are becoming a nuisance.

Those items are obviously related in a vague sort of way, because they all deal with

Two venerable fans give their views

motion pictures. But I think that there is a more significant factor back of them, one that applies to fandom and may be some indication of one trend that fandom may undergo in the years to come. Moreover, they link up with some other events that have been happening in the fannish world: the appeal for funds and makeup classes that Los Angeles fandom have staged in preparation for production of more movies, increased emphasis on fantasy in pictorial rather than written form as a basis for fanzines and fanzine articles, and the increasing availability of tape recorders in every fan's assortment of necessities of life.

If you haven't guessed already, I suspect that movie-making and movie-watching will become a more important phase of fan activity in the next few years, as a result of improved technology in movie-making components, the example that has been set by certain fan movie projects and the spreading realization that there are ways to create fantasy without writing stories for the dwindling prozine market.

Up to now, sustained moviemaking projects in fandom have been so scarce that I hardly imagine that they'll require more than a couple of pages in that fan history that I intend to write. We know that some fans took movies at the first world conventions. Morrie Dollens and Ed Emsh have done one-man animation and experimental movie production. The recent Los Angeles projects have received the widest sorts of publicity. Three or four fans have become standard fixtures in the last few world conventions as filmers of the main program items. Sam Lundwall has led a fairly strong Swedish fan movie movement, although most of the group's major projects are not completed as yet. For some reason, Canadians have led the way in writing about movies in fanzines, as distinct from creating movies. Bill Grant and Les Croutch have been particularly prominent in this respect.

I imagine that there are two major causes for the spotty record of fan movie activities in the past: expense and sound. Until the past few years, sound movies for amateurs have been pretty much confined to 16 mm productions, and expenses mushroom tremendously when you're using 16 mm film and equipment, as the Los Angeles fans have discovered. Moreover, 8 mm amateur movies have a bad reputation in some circles, partly deserved. Poor equipment or careless use of it can make 8 mm images too fuzzy to permit showing on the large screen required for a good-sized group of spectators. Even when good equipment is properly used, the tiny 8 mm frames can't produce the same quality when enlarged to the same size as 16 mm movies.

(Continued at top of next column)

But better emulsions, tape recording, transistors, and other technical advances have altered the whole world of movie making. I believe that fandom should think seriously about standardizing its movie production efforts on 8 mm, except in special cases, to prevent this possible trend from dying before it really gets born. (continued on next page)

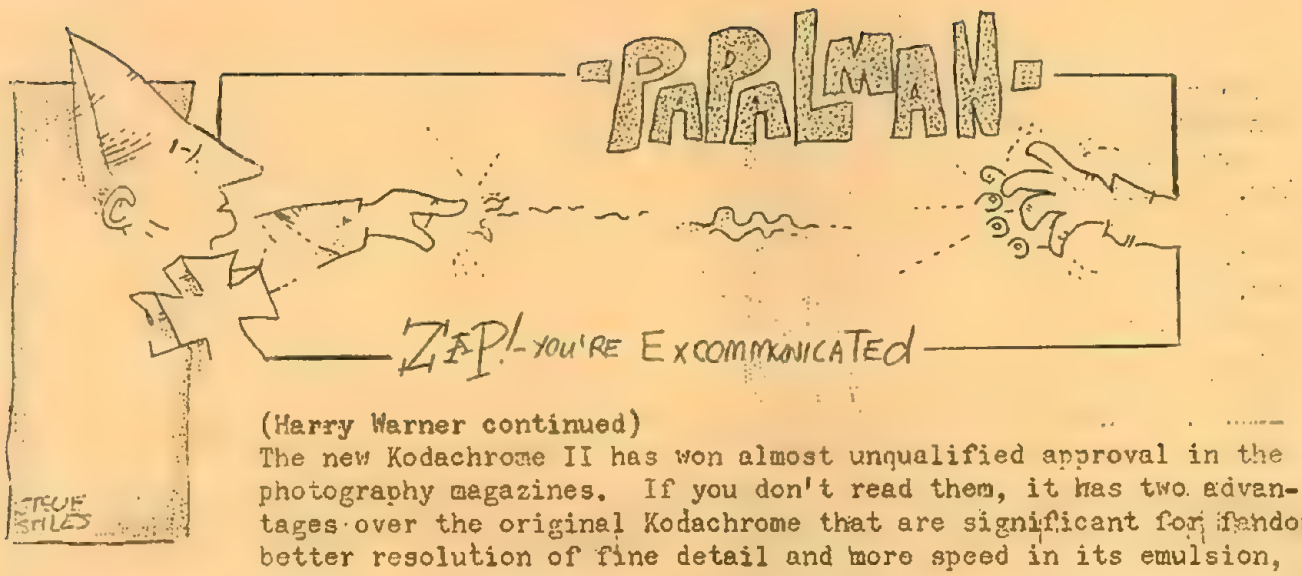
HOCUS FOCUS

on a venerable subject: fantasy amateur films

HAL LYNCH:

Back in 1956, when we PS-FSers premiered our 8 mm fanfilm at the New York worldcon, I hopefully predicted that fannish film production would soon take its place beside publication as a major form of fanac. I said I hoped our film would inspire other fanclubs to undertake similar productions which might then be exchanged among groups across the country and abroad -- "inspire" if only by showing others they could hardly do worse. Since our little film was subsequently shown at the Londoncon and at Liverpool, it may have contributed in some small measure to later British fan film production efforts, but generally the awakening of fannish interest in this form of egoxpression is still to come.

(I realize that from the earliest fannish get-togethers there have been those who have attempted to make historic records of these great events on film, but speaking personally, I do not share the enthusiasm of Harry Warner, First Fandomites, and apparently a vast number of others for this form of film making.
(continued fourth page following)



(Harry Warner continued)
The new Kodachrome II has won almost unqualified approval in the photography magazines. If you don't read them, it has two advantages over the original Kodachrome that are significant for fandom: better resolution of fine detail and more speed in its emulsion, requiring less light for any given lens setting. One series of tests showed that the old Kodachrome provides resolution of 14 to 20 lines per millimeter, depending on how accurately the film was exposed. The new emulsion provides resolution of 56 lines per millimeter, a figure that held steady even during moderate over- or under-exposure. If the fan's camera and projector are good enough to make use of the improved resolution power, it means that 8 mm movies can be enlarged to cover larger screens before they become objectionably fuzzy. It is even conceivable that this new Kodachrome will permit the creation of microfiles of rare fanzines and prozines on 8 mm film. I haven't seen any report on its copying potentialities, but it sounds as if it just might be able to reproduce legibly one 8x10 page of medium-sized type per frame. (The "lines" used for resolution tests are just plain lines, not lines of type, you see, so the old stuff was not capable of handling the multiple ups and downs in a line of type.) Before you hurry out to buy ten reels of Kodachrome II on which you will microfilm your entire fantasy collection, let me hasten to point out that you'll have to rig up your own projector to use as a reader; even though most movie projectors can stop on single frames, they aren't suited for this use for a variety of reasons.

The faster emulsion in the new Kodachrome will permit much indoor moviemaking with existing light that was impossible in the past. It should be possible to handle many indoor filming jobs without photofloods with Kodachrome II. The daylight speed is 25, compared with 10 for the old daylight emulsion, and the photoflood speed is 40, compared with 16, for the artificial light emulsion. At worst, it will reduce greatly the size of the floods and spots that the movie maker must lug around and the amount of power that must be loaded onto barely adequate lighting circuits. It is true that there has been a fairly fast color movie film available for some time, Ansco's Moviechrome, but it lacks the sharpness and low graininess of Kodachrome.

All this assumes that you insist on color in your amateur movies. If you are willing to settle for black and white, your 8 mm camera can handle virtually any existing light situation with Perutz' superb film. It doesn't jam in the camera like repooled film sold for this purpose by some large camera shops, acuity is excellent, it's available in speeds up to ASA 400, and even this fastest emulsion isn't objectionably grainy when projected at moderate degrees of enlargement.

Of course these new advantages apply to 16 mm just as to 8 mm, and it's much easier to get good sound reproduction from magnetically striped 16 mm movies than from the 8 mm film that has less room for a sufficiently wide stripe and travels slower. But there are several reasons why I question the wisdom of using 16 mm for fan movie productions. Costs are so much higher. Typical prices for one large firm that caters to serious amateurs are $2.75 for film and processing for a double 25-foot reel of Kodachrome, $8.00 for its 16 mm equivalent, a 100-foot reel. Worse yet,

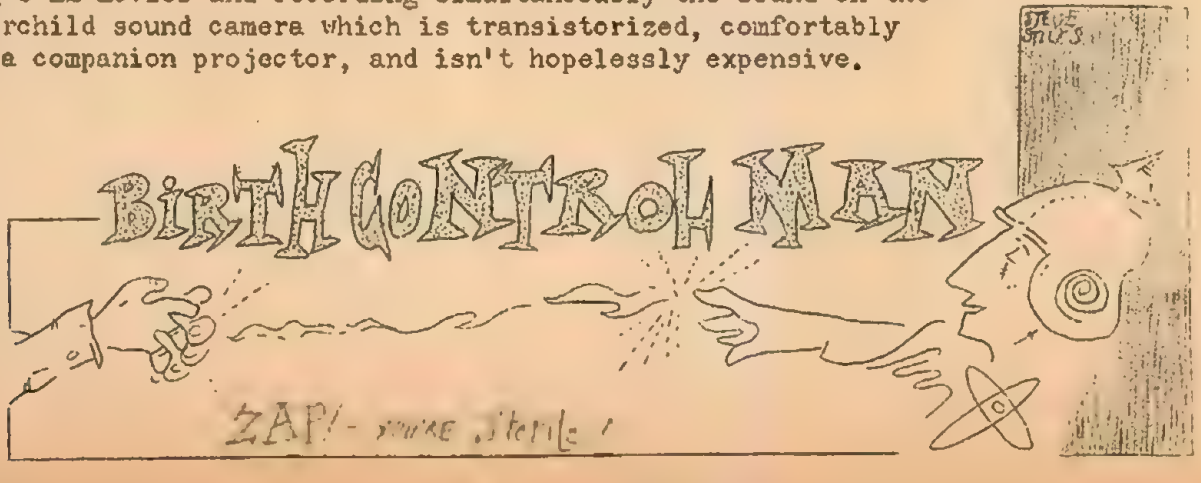
you'll probably take and project 16 mm sound movies at 24 frames per second, half again as fast as the rate for silent 8 mm movies, jacking up the cost per minute of filming still more. Anyone can afford a silent 8 mm projector these days, but I doubt that there are more than three or four fan clubs and as many more lone wolf fans in the nation who have constant access to a 16 mm sound projector. But before I go any further on this topic, I'd like to say something about the five weeks between my discharge from the hospital and my return to work, during the broken hip period of my life.

I saw some televised movies during those weeks. By great good chance, a Washington station chose that particular epoch to telecast a 1922 Will Rogers feature, "The Headless Horseman". This isn't a real fantasy, because there's a mundane explanation of everything. But I was enchanted by so many things in it -- the expression on Will's face as he heard the hoofs of the headless horseman pounding behind him, his shouts of protest as Ichabod Crane was threatened with tarring and feathering while under suspicion of communing with witches, the dissonances he tried uselessly to resolve during a singing lesson at the little church. I couldn't have enjoyed these things any more if I'd heard them, because this, you see, is a silent movie, and it was screened with no sound except the kind of organ music that was normally used for the old pre-sound movies. I suspect that dubbed-in sound effects of the hoofs, shouts, and singing would have broken completely the spell.

I also viewed for the first time a short that won much praise and attention a few years back, "The Red Balloon". This is the French movie of the little boy who makes friends with a balloon. It is soundless except for a few crowd noises, an occasional half-heard snatch of conversation, and a scattering of sound effects. I think that it would have been ruined by conversation or even a ceaseless background of music. (I'm not entirely happy with the ending: there is little symbolism in the sudden decision of the balloons to carry the boy away through the sky, and I was wishing desperately that it would conclude with the balloons alone withdrawing in this manner from mankind for its cruelty to one of their number, but this is beside the present point.)

Either of these movies stands out in my memory as far superior to almost all of the chatter-laden sound movies that I've seen. Both are borderline fantasy films. There may be a significance in these two facts. Isn't it possible that sound and movies are considered as inseparable too often these days? Especially in efforts to film fantasy, isn't it probable that the screen can take you out of this mundane world more easily if human voices and loud orchestral music aren't blaring reminders of it in your ears?

It isn't likely that any readily available 8 mm sound system will provide the excellence you heard in "The Musquite Kid". But there are several methods of obtaining something very nearly as good at a price that fans can afford without mortgaging their immortal souls. At least one piece of equipment is now available for silming 8 mm movies and recording simultaneously the sound on the film: a Fairchild sound camera which is transistorized, comfortably small, has a companion projector, and isn't hopelessly expensive.



[illegible] with which you put the sound onto tape either [illegible], then synchronize the tape recorder with the film mechanical or electronic means. Lip synchronization is theoretically possible with some of these systems, although voltage variations, tape stretching, and oth[illegible] problems can be a nuisance. You can also have a magnetic stripe put on your [illegible], and do the recording on it at your leisure after you've done the filming; the amount of synchronization in this system is dependent on your patience and skill in matching the sound with the pictures. The simplest method of all is to record the sound on a tape recorder, start recorder and projector at the same time, and try to keep them in step by varying the speed of the projector. If you must have sound, any of these procedures is complicated; but so is the editing task when you record sound on film you take the movies and have the sound a few dozen frames away from the picture at all times.

If fans should agree on 8 mm for filming activites, aside from spectaculars that are intended for showing to large groups, it might restore interest to fans whose activity in the field has been jaded by fanzine publishing, it should provide program material for fan clubs everywhere, and it would simplify enormously the procedure of exchanging movies, using the equipment of others, and entering the movie field without spending a tremendous sum. I think that there are scores of pieces of fandom fiction, parables and parodies in fanzines that could be converted into movies at little expense, using the simplest of sound or none at all. This would be a fine time for some energetic fans to get started on the task of recreating on film great moments in fandom, to fill in the gaps caused by the absence of movie cameras at the original occasions. If we don't start it soon, the original participants will be too old to be convincing in the re-enactments. It might be possible for movie makers at conventions to pool their footage and piece together from it a brief reel of highlights which could be duplicated and sold to interested attendees who want a permanent record of what they saw. Filming stuff from the prozines is less practical, because copyright laws might interfere, but there is nothing to prevent fan movies based on scenes from stf that has come into the public domain. If you just want to collect movies with fantasy themes, there is a fair selection available on 8 mm silents, not as much as on 16 mm sound films, but you won't be able to afford much of the latter, anyway.

And finally, for the comic book enthusiasts, an 8 mm camera provides a fine tool for experimenting with animation. You can do extreme closeups and create an illusion of motion through the tricks that television has utilized for Brady photographs, zooming and moving the illustration and panning the camera, cutting rapidly from one scene to another and in general getting around most of the impression of motionless scenes.

Or you might bring yourself to cut up a couple of comic books and do animation by moving the figures around slowly, clicking off one frame at a time, and making the fabulous men of the comic books go through all sorts of new adventures.

It might sound like a lot of trouble, but I don't think you'll find it as bad as reading today's prozines.

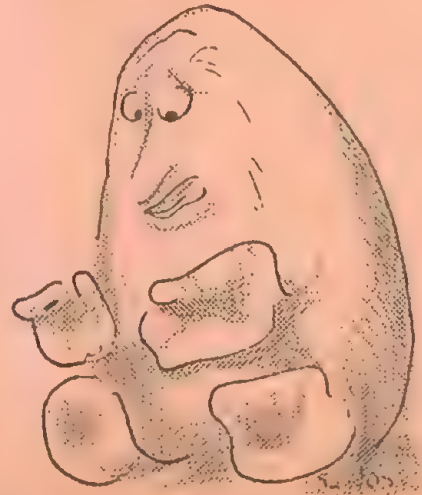
— Harry Warner

(Hal Lynch continued)
To me an amateur film with no story, no matter how rudimentary or badly organized, is immeasurably above the finest newsreel documentary of Doc Smith, Hugo Gernsback, or Isaac Asimov chatting about sf (though I esteem these gentlemen most highly), to say nothing about more personal filmic souvenirs of one's convention enjoyment. I seek no quarrel with the people who like these kinds of films, but it should be understood that when I talk about fanfilmakers I am not talking about film historians and newsreelers.

XERO's sterling Editor, noting the technical possibilities outlined by Mr. Werner and noting, also, the current resurgence of interest in fanfilms, has suggested that a kind of filming apa be formed and has suggested, further, that I write an article about it. What bothers me about this (among other things) is that I have written several articles for fanzines lately and they all seem to turn out to be pleas to organize this or organize that, as though I have devoted myself to singing Joe Hill's swan song throughout fandom. Okay. Let it be understood that I am in favor of doing something that required a degree of cooperation among fans, but let it be done, as far as I am concerned, with as little organization as possible. Let holy nonconformity be rife!

If there are, indeed, a number of fannish film makers who desire to exhibit their efforts to fandom, I do not think they need to form an apa, or anything closely resembling one, to fill their need for filmic ego-boo. I suggest, instead, that these battlescarred souls (I know whereof I speak, being one) get together at a worldcon, or get together by correspondence before a worldcon, and form an unorganized o****-[illegible] on a party at the next worldcon. This party will feature food and drink, and be charged for by some kind of admission. The party will also, naturally, feature films. I, again speaking personally, would arbitrarily exclude "fannish newsreels" unless they were really old, rare, or otherwise especially noteworthy. I would likewise exclude any films over a certain arbitrary length (say 10 minutes) or produced beyond a certain minimum budget. If such films are available they ought, if they are worthy of it, to get a bigger splash at the con by being shown with appropriate fanfare at a suitable time.

The o**********n, or let's just say those responsible for the party, will set an absolute limit of how many minutes of film will be shown. Films will be included or excluded on two grounds: order of receipt (if it comes in too late, too bad), and subject matter. Subject matter: first priority, amateur sf or fantasy films by fans or professionals; second, films about fans or fannish activity, by fans; third, films by some mundane chap but starring one or more fans; fourth, really unusual or offbeat short films on some subject of special interest to fans. The quality, artistic merit, social significance, or production standards of the film will not be judged for inclusion in the showing. Many fanfilms will be lousy; possibly their makers will profit by criticism, possibly not.



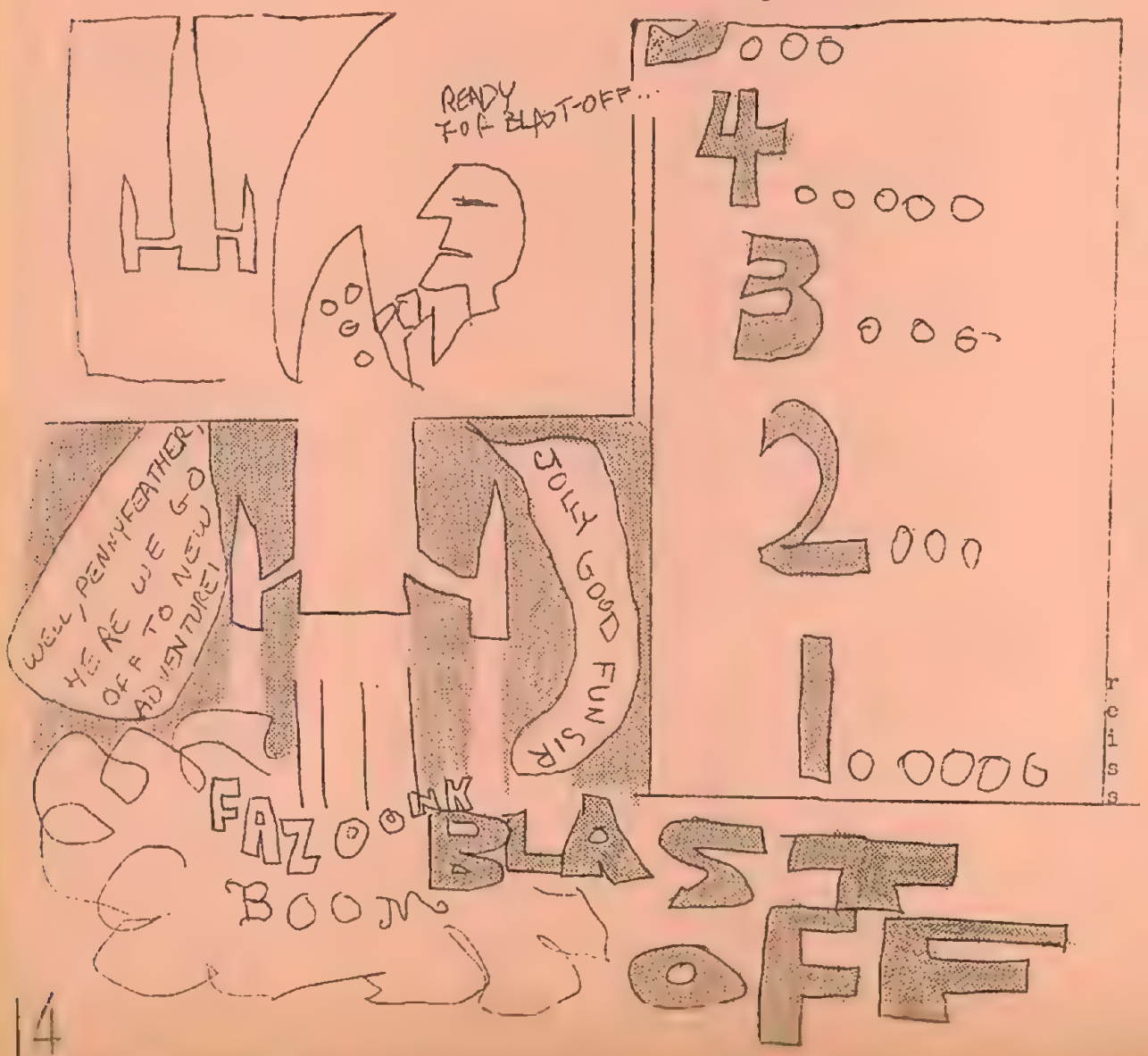
Nevertheless, it is better not to get into hassles over whether or not a film is "good enough to be shown". Nobody will be forced to attend the party; anybody who does come will get food and drink for his admission and any other benefits will be strictly a matter of luck. The inevitable criticism will be distorted enough without introducing formal judgements of quality -- notice I am not suggesting awards, selection of "bests", etc. To be at all fair, amateur films must be judged on such bases as type of equipment available, experience,

including related vocational experience, a dozen angles that make judgement difficult. If you see two fan films, one of which was put together out of blood, sweat, and tears in East Overshoe, South Dakota, by a kid who went out into the woods with a battered Kodak Brownie, and the other of which was produced by a fan with a borrowed Mitchell whose father happens to be a big-time TV producer, it's a little hard to make comparisons, even if the two films do not happen to be on two totall different subjects.

So let's just make an informal party of it, and if, after a few years' delay, fandom is finally turning out in large numbers to the making of fannish films, let's deal with the problems of too many films and no time to show 'em when that time comes.

After the con, if the history of our PS-FS films is any example, the film makers will get requests for loans of their films by various clubs across the country. The safest way to handle this, I think, is to ask for a substantial cash deposit by the borrower. Maybe a group, or o**********n, could establish this tradition; I never had the nerve to do it on my own. I mean, I was so flattered when requests began to come in from fan groups for showings of our film I sent the darn thing right out without any assurance it would ever be returned, or in what condition. Just lucky, I guess, every user returned it in the condition he got it. When you have only one print, and 8 mm films are very expensive to have duped, you can't help but be nervous about its safety.

— Hal Lynch



MESOPOTAMIA

in the shallow sleazy
sunlight
sits a snarkle sipping
soy sauce
stares a psycho on a cycle
on a dais in vendemos
stares a madman screaming
mimis
screams a mimi yelling maybes
stands a snarkle smiling
psycho
captain snarkles singing
psycle

- peter schug

from the SF shelf

by Larry M. Harris

the finish line II.

Last month's piece drew what seems to be an awful lot of mail (which, after all, I guess I asked for), and a couple of correspondents mentioned that, in spite of my promise to deal with all the works of Sturgeon, I had only managed to discuss the sf novels. To these correspondents I should like to suggest a course of action for the future: read the column. I promised last month that I would go on with the rest of the Sturgeon opera, if readers didn't object; and those who did read the column, for the most part, did not object.

Therefore, we progress. First the oddities, and then the collections of shorts.

The oddities -- three non-sf novels -- bring the total volume count to fourteen. These are, in order of publication, I, LIBERTINE (as by "Frederick R. Ewing," Ballantine, 1956), THE KING AND FOUR QUEENS (Dell, 1956) and the latest opus, SOME OF YOUR BLOOD (Ballantine, 1961).

"Frederick R. Ewing," the non-existent author of I, LIBERTINE, is a joint creation of Sturgeon and the bard of New York's less stable Night People, Jean Shepherd. My copy carries "Ewing's" autograph, the first name and initial in Sturgeon's handwriting, the last name in Shephard's; but who contributed what to the finished book is hard to tell. Since there is very little in the novel that couldn't be Sturgeon's alone, I think I'm probably safe in saying that only the creation of its lead character is Shepherd's. This lead is Lance Courtenay, a young man of unknown birth, apprenticed to a marvelous old lawyer named Barrowbridge, who is trying, with Barrowbridge's aid, to make a place for himself in the stratified England of the late 18th Century.

In other words, he is the typical hero of a historical novel. Except that, of course, he isn't. The book itself is a joke, meant as a joke, and Lance is the fool-as-hero. He frightens people, for instance, by a terrifying self-possessed sneer -- but the sneer is involuntary, caused by the suction of his upper lip against a hollow tooth, and happens without his knowing it when he, himself, gets scared.

Now, Sturgeon's approach has never involved the hero-as-fool; it's more likely, as in MORE THAN HUMAN, to involve the fool-as-hero. I take it, then, that Lance is Shepherd's creation. The rest of the book is recognizably Sturgeon's. Here we have again the hell-for-leather overtopping-adjective language of Basic Sturgeon; the plot that moves in every direction at once, in order to keep the writer from boredom; the characters introduced, forgotten, picked up again when needed -- and, as a matter of fact, a fairly funny and very exciting book. If you can find it, buy it.

Unfortunately, I can not make the same recommendation about THE KING AND FOUR QUEENS. In this one, Sturgeon was handed the job of novelizing a screen-play --- dealing, that is, with someone else's ideas, not only at base but in detail. This is always a terrible job for a writer, and for Sturgeon, whose own writing is so much involved with his own surprise -- he doesn't know what's going to happen next -- the job must have been sheer torture. By a long shot the worst book to bear the Sturgeon name, THE KING AND FOUR QUEENS is pedestrian, tired and slow. If you saw the Clark Gable movie, you know the plot; if not, it involves a heroic Western type searching for $100,000 in gold dust, and four women who want it for themselves and who impede his search. Naturally, the good guy wins. Naturally, the bad guys lose. (There are lots of bad guys, including the people at Dell who handed Sturgeon this idea.) And I'll bet that it took more typewriter-time than any other work to bear the Sturgeon imprint.

And now -- and now, SOME OF YOUR BLOOD. This one seems to have confused everybody: Tony Boucher, who called it a mystery novel in the Sunday TIMES, Alfred Bester, who called it science-fiction in F&SF, and the anonymous blurb-writer over at Ballantine, who writes, on the inside-front page where you can usually find a quick and inaccurate summary:

> "Theodore Sturgeon...a first class talent and a master in the field of writing...it really doesn't matter very much what he writes about... It is his peculiar talent to write a story of horror (but not a horror story)...."

and so on, for about a hundred and fifty words of confusion. This book has people running around in circles. Let's shed a little light.

It isn't science fiction. It is based, in its entirety, on a factual psychiatric record. Only the names have been changed and so on. It is not a mystery (unless you want to call THE CAINE MUTINY, for instance, a mystery -- there's a surprise at the end, and some suspense before that). It is a novel. Or, maybe better, it is a piece of a novel.

The story (and this one, friends, I am not going to give away -- buy it and shiver) deals with a very odd psychiatric case in an Army hospital in the recent past. It is told entirely through documents: psychiatrists' letters, reports of tests, the subject's "autobiography", Q&A sessions. For sheer authenticity, it is probably the best novel ever written about a psychiatrist (and no wonder: Sturgeon tells me he had access to the original files, and had the book checked by the original doctor in charge before publication). The question set up early in the book is just this: what is this man's mental trouble, to what acts has it led, that others are horrified at his very presence? The question is answered on the last page, leaving the resulting fate of every major character about one hundred and fourteen feet in the air. Sturgeon attempts to gloss this over with a spooky-type Inner Sanctum introduction and close, much better than such things usually are, but it won't gloss. We want to know about the people; we are interested in the people; and Sturgeon resolutely refuses to tell.

The book could have been written to prove the theories I set forth in part one. It was written in a great rush; it skips around from one technique of narrative to another so Sturgeon won't get bored; it ends when Sturgeon is tired and not when the book is over. It's written, by the way, half in Basic Sturgeon and a little less

than half in Sturgeon in Excelsis -- all of which makes this an extraordinarily varied and interesting book.

Did I say buy it?

Buy it.

*

We now move on to the short stories. Sturgeon's first book was a collection, published in 1948, of shorts from ASF and UNKNOWN. Called WITHOUT SORCERY, it has 17 stories (which I take to be deliberate) and an introduction by Ray Bradbury, full of praise and quite justified. The stories are a sort of summary of all the Sturgeons -- from the thoughtful probing of MATURITY to the sheer extrapolative fun of THE ULTIMATE EGOIST and POKER FACE and BOTTLE DOP and MICROCOSMIC GOD, to the half-mechanical Model Of Story which, thank God, Sturgeon is not turning out any more (ARTHAM PROCESS, ETHER BREATHER, BUTYL AND THE BREATHER, TWO PERCENT INSPIRATION). to the shallow thinking and fine writing of CARGO and MEMORIAL -- and the sheer writing conviction of BRAT and IT. This one is the basic book; more than any other, it will give the neophyte an idea of what Sturgeon can, and can't, do.

"Flower Dance"

He can't, for instance, write hell-for-breakfast, shoot-'em-up adventure (as readers of THE KING AND FOUR QUEENS know already). When he tries (TWO PERCENT INSPIRATION), humor keeps breaking in. He can't, either, write like Thorne Smith, though ETHER BREATHER and BUTYL AND THE BREATHER are exemplary lessons in how to work hard at the idea:

> "'Come up,' he whispered, his wattles quivering. 'But I warn you, if you dare to take this liberty on a bluff, I shall most certainly have you pried loose from your esophagus.'" (BUTYL AND THE BREATHER, pp. 164-165, Prime Press edition.)

He can't write like George O. Smith, either (and it is perfectly beyond me why he should want to try, but he did, in ARTHAM PROCESS):

> "'What's their ship like?' Slimmy wanted to know.
>
> "'Smooth,' said Bell. 'An Ikarion 44, with all the fixin's. Got that old-style ether-cloud steering for hyper-space travel, though -- you know -- the one what builds etheric resistance on one bow or the other to turn the ship when she's traveling faster than light? We can outmaneuver them if it comes to a chase.'" (P. 120.)

What he can do is write like Sturgeon, and meditate like Sturgeon. Stories like THE ULTIMATE EGOIST and IT and POKER FACE and SHOTTLE BOP and MATURITY and MICROCOSMIC GOD are too well known for me to describe here; but they are lovely, perfect things, each worth the price of the volume.

And he can write a dedication unmatched, as far as I know, in recent years:

> "To MARY MAIR
> who in spite of the
> envy of angels will live
> forever."

But let us go on.

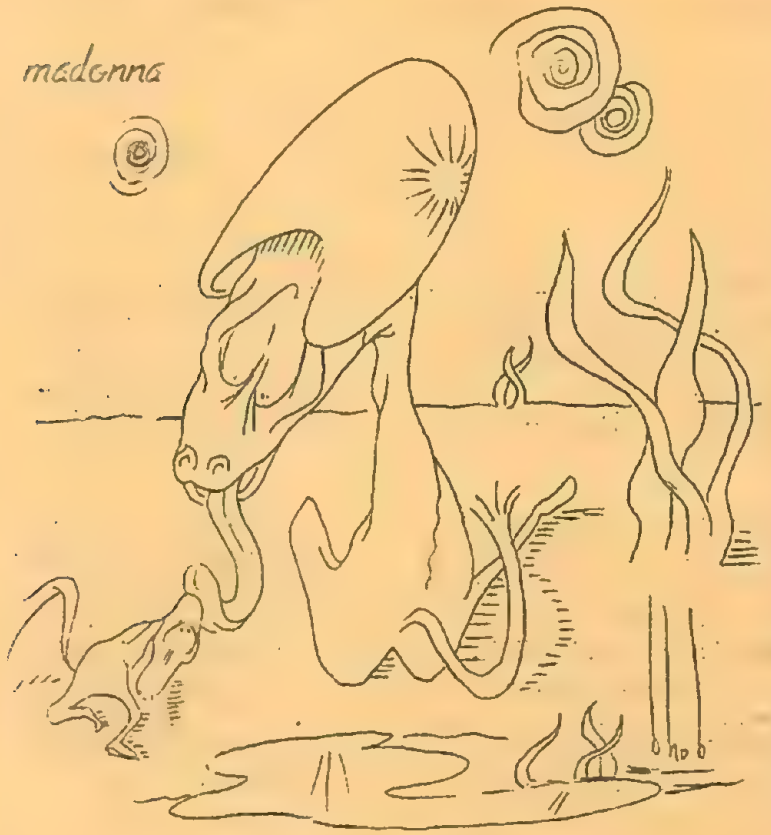
In his next collection, E PLURIBUS UNICORN (Abelard-Schuman, 1953), Sturgeon began to show some evidence of widening interests. Here we have SCARS, which is an adult Western to end all adult Westerns, and DIE, MAESTRO, DIE!, which is perhaps the worst title for a good crime story ever let loose on an unsuspecting world. DIE etc. remains on my small shelf of good stories about jazz -- as does Chad Oliver's DIDN'T HE RAMBLE from F&SF, by the way.

Outside of this, we have an introduction by Groff Conklin, which is mawkish, oversentimental and downright silly, and 11 other stories, plus a bibliographical appendix which only goes to prove how much good Sturgeon was still unanthologized (and unwritten). This is Sturgeon's horror collection; it includes IT WASN'T SYZYGY, THE MUSIC, FLUFFY, CELLMATE, and THE PROFESSOR'S TEDDY BEAR, all of which seem primarily to attempt the simple chill of terror or repugnance, and all of which except THE MUSIC, which is a very short inside-a-madman's-mind thing, succeed. It's his poetry collection, too: here are THE SILKEN-SWIFT and BIANCA'S HANDS, which are cream too rich for me; these are Sturgeon so far In Excelsis that he appears to have lost touch with any solid world at all. They read rather like James Stephens in his CROCK OF GOLD mood, which is for me sufficient condemnation.

A SAUCER OF LONELINESS, THE WORLD WELL LOST, THE SEX OPPOSITE, and A WAY OF THINKING are here, too -- and these are fine examples of the Thinking Man's Sturgeon. For the first time in the short collections, Sturgeon's interest in the variety of possible relations between people is coming clear; here we find love frustrated by physical accident (SCARS), love in poetry (THE SILKEN-SWIFT) and poetry in ugliness (BIANCA'S HANDS), a closer relationship than any one possible to humans (IT WASN'T SYZYGY, THE SEX OPPOSITE), love-and-revenge (DIE etc., A WAY OF THINKING), "perverted" love (THE WORLD WELL LOST), hypnotic attraction (CELLMATE), and even the Outsider, the man or woman who leaves all society, or is left by it (FLUFFY, A SAUCER OF LONELINESS). This business of relationships, and the variety of love, is a note struck again and again in Sturgeon's work; in this book, it comes to its first flower.

In CAVIAR, it comes to its second. This is a very mixed bag: MICROCOSMIC GOD shows up again, and so does PRODIGY (the only child on future Earth who is a misfit -- he has only five fingers, see? The story is better than that, but not much better) and SHADOW, SHADOW ON THE WALL (one more rewrite of SREDNI VASHTAR, neither better nor worse than the many others). But beyond these we find ourselves home with GHOST OF A CHANCE (a very early specimen, somewhat creaky about the joints), MEDUSA, BLABBERMOUTH (both these about the closenesses of the mind -- one con, one pro) and TWINK. This last is the one about the father who's in touch with the mind of his unborn child, and maybe I have a mental block. Better people than I have liked it, but to me it seems verbose, uncontrolled and cloudy as to point and plot. Must be me.

The book also contains BRIGHT SEGMENT, the story about the moronic janitor who finds a girl with a fractured skull and attempts to doctor her himself. This one's about the nature of love, too -- love as possession. The story itself is a great oddity, not science-fiction, not any category, and published as an original in the collection because, apparently, no magazine had either the guts or the sense to see it for the small jewel it is.



I find I am getting both gusy and verbose, and maybe we had better cover the other volumes more or less simultaneously, pointing out high spots, trends, and some morals. These others are, in order A WAY HOME (Funk and Wagnalls, 1955; Pyramid, 1956), A TOUCH OF STRANGE (Doubleday, 1958), ALIENS 4 (Avon, 1959) and BEYOND (Avon, 1960). The first notable thing is that these volumes bring the total of Sturgeon's publishers to eight, for fourteen books. This is, I imagine, something like a record for an author using only one byline, and it appears to represent another peculiarity in the Sturgeon cosmos.

The fact is that, as I have said before, authors need money. In order to get this money they are likely to agree to collaboration on good books like I, LIBERTINE, and even bad books, like THE KING AND FOUR QUEENS; they are likely to finish up work in a hurry for sale; they are, also, likely to listen with open ears to anyone, anyone, bidding real cash for work. Avon will pay money for Sturgeon? Very well, Avon will get some story collections. Dell will pay? There's some for Dell, too. And for Abelard-Schuman, for Prime Press, for Ballantine...on and on. What if it makes for confused bibliographies -- and for uneven books? Money is the thing, at least on this level of decision. Money gives you the time for the long meditations that make for quick typewriter work. Money stops the worries that prevent any typewriter work at all. By all means, money is the anodyne -- and bidders mean money.

Given that, it's something of a surprise (or it would be to anyone who didn't know the high quality of Sturgeon's work) that the collections are as good as they are. It's not so surprising that, in the rush of collection, some good stories get left out. (For instance, YESTERDAY WAS MONDAY, a fine fantasy from UNKNOWN, and WHAT DEAD MEN TELL, an ASF puzzle-story from the November 1949 trick issue.)

The four collections noted contain no duplications, and only one original -- NEED, in BEYOND, a story I can't imagine F&SF not buying. Apparently, however, they passed it up in favor of Robert F. Young (are you listening, God?) and Avon got it first. More and more, Sturgeon is generalizing his approach; from the love-patterns of the early books to more general relationship-patterns here. THE (WIDGET), THE (WADGET) AND BOFF, in ALIENS 4, digs especially deep, as does the original NEED and IT OPENS THE SKY, from A TOUCH OF STRANGE. Sturgeon is, after all, interested primarily in people, and the shape and color of what people do to, and with, each other -- the

only interest, in the long run, which is worth a serious writer's attention, Heinlein to the contrary. There have been attempts to find deep psychological motivations for this interest, which began with love-relationships of a rather simple order, moved to odder love-relationships, and finally generalized itself fully in recent years; but I'm not going down that endless trail with the rest of the White Hunters. Sufficient unto the day is the fact thereof; and Sturgeon's earnest, terribly detailed prying into what makes people act with other people can stand without explanation.

The shorts do have flaws, God knows; occasionally (for a vivid example, try THE TOUCH OF YOUR HAND in A TOUCH OF STRANGE) they appear unfinished, or brought to hurriedly to a money-making close. The early work is sometimes embarrasingly crude and awkward, and even some more recent material (like CACTUS DANCE in ALIENS 4 and A WAY HOME in the volume of the same name) shows the signs of a desperate man, writing because, by God, writing is what fills the pocketbook and the mind.

And the third-rate poetry of THE SILKEN-SWIFT is still, sometimes, popping up its flower-encrusted little pointy head -- see LARGO, in BEYOND, for a good example:

> "....Some day he would have her back. Some day she would emerge from his violin in a great bubble of melody which would settle before him, open up and reveal her there as she had been on that summer evening. And she would be his. Toward that iridescent ideal, he strove." (P. 120.)

Oh, God. But -- as Chesterton said -- in order to fall from the sublime to the ridiculous, it is necessary first to reach the sublime. And that, supremely for pages at a time if never for a whole book, for certain stories, in a way of thinking entirely his own and very wide in scope, is what Sturgeon has managed to do.

If, some day, he retains the patience and the drive to complete a book -- to reach the finish line an inch short of total exhaustion -- then, by God, don't wait for my recommendation. You won't need it. You will see the reviews all over, and the astonished faces: "Where has this man been all this time?"

In the first ten pages, sir -- in the opening sections, madam -- of every story he ever wrote.

*

My apologies, dear and kindly readers, for the unconscionable length of this one. But I was bound and determined to finish the piece in this issue, in order to avoid more letters telling me that I hadn't fulfilled my promise.

O.K. now?

Next month, a short discourse on a new paperback line, vaguely associated with sf, and, I hope, the beginnings of an argument with Mr. Alfred Bester, on the nature of, and the particular values of, Personality in Fiction. For your homework, you might read the Bester piece in THE SCIENCE-FICTION NOVEL (Advent).

Then again, you might not.

THE HARD WAY

by james blish

(ROGUE MOON BY ALGIS BUDRYS
GOLD MEDAL BOOKS, 1960. 176 PP; 35c)

From his first magazine appearance in science fiction, Algis Budrys was clearly a born writer, as opposed to the technicians who have lately dominated this field. Budrys is, inarguably, a technician himself, and a consummately skillful one, but his gifts go far beyond craftsmanship into that instinctual realm where dwell the genuine ear for melos and the polyphony of the English language, and the fundamental insight into the human heart.

I do not in the least mean to disparage craftsmanship. It is essential, and that realization is what made the science fiction of the 1940's so strikingly, gratifyingly superior to most of what had been published before. It is the reason why newcomsers like Heinlein, Kuttner, and del Rey were able effortlessly to push offstage writers who had dominated the medium for many years, and furthermore, keep them offstage while other newcomers with respect for their craft filled in the lower echelons.

Yet it's striking that there has been no qualitative change in magazine science fiction since. The technicians are still front and center, and the newcomers to their ranks have acquired the firm notion that a bag of tricks -- a rather small bag -- is all there is to writing (or at least, all that's needful to keep selling). The next logical stage, the infusion of genuine human emotion into the genre, has failed to materialize.

There are of course writers who have tried it -- Stuart, del Rey, Kornbluth, Sturgeon, Bradbury, and perhaps one or two others -- but successful though they sometimes were in bringing it off, they failed to set an example the majority of science fiction writers were willing to follow. Any number of reasons could be adduced for this, and I will offer only the first few that occur to me: (1) Individual writers such as Bradbury and Sturgeon proved to be too idiosyncratic for other writers to follow without turning into disciples or outright parasites; (2) striving for genuine human emotion is one hell of a lot harder work than mastering a Mysto Magic Kit, especially at 2¢ a word; and (3) the overwhelming majority of science-fiction readers have made it clear that they actively distrust and dislike emotional content in stories, even in the rare instances where the author has it under perfect control.

These are not the only factors involved, but they alone are enough to cripple the writer who wants to produce this kind of copy. They have duly crippled four of the five examples I have named; the fifth, who was never entirely at home here anyhow, had the good sense, both artistic and financial, to get out. They have never crippled Budrys in any visible way; and though he too appears to be on the way out, he has left us ROGUE MOON, as a testament and a promise.

The novel (the version published by F&SF is about as representative of the whole as a veal cutlet is of a calf) is a testament to the fact that Budrys the science-fiction writer is the only one of his generation who has never stopped learning and growing. (In fact he is the only one to show himself capable of learning anything at all, so we are phenomenally lucky that he did it on so grand a scale.) That he had many good gifts was evident from the outset, but in addition he has prosecuted their use to the uttermost limits of his strength. If he is now to go on to a larger audience, as he should, it is only after writing a work which epitomizes everything he has ever had to offer us.

So it is no surprise that ROGUE MOON is a masterpiece. It would have been visibly a masterpiece in any year; it was especially conspicuous in 1960, a year in which its nearest competitor (and that is not very near) was an admittedly electrifying blood-and-thunder novel harking back (even in its atrocious grammar) to the dear dead days of Karl Vincent and Charles Willard Diffin. No other entry showed even this much merit, though several were ambitious enough in intent.

This magazine has the space, I am assured, but I don't have the guts to attempt a full-scale analysis of ROGUE MOON; though the plot is deceptively simple, both conception and execution are so complex that such an analysis would be scanty were it twice as long as the novel itself. How would I have the brass to offer the "essence of the case, which is knowable only to Budrys. But in my own universe, two layers of this multiples structure bulk largest.

To me, then, ROGUE MOON is primarily a man-against-nature story in which the devices, the symbols, the machinery being brought to bear upon it by the author are those of modern warfare. The battlefield is the death machine on the moon; the weapons are the technology mustered to get through the machine, logistics included -- which, with marvelous appropriateness, are as deadly as the death machine itself, killing "us" even before "they" do, <u>but without our being aware of it</u>. This point is driven home by the device of the duplicated man, who although he dies many times both on Earth and in the death machine and is able to remember each death, can never be convinced that he is not the same person who began the experiment.

There are two stories being told: the apparently simple man-against-nature yarn and the pacifist parable. It is also clear, however, that the "nature" of the first story and the "enemy" of the second are identical, and that neither of them are located on the moon; they are in the souls of the men themselves, in short they are not "them" but "us". After all, the dan-

machine (like any other fact of nature) has been there for a million years without killing a soul, and it is far from certain -- indeed, highly unlikely -- that killing men is what it was designed to do. The two-fold enemy is the viewpoint character's drive for knowledge at any cost, and that of the secondary lead for suicide. In this case, much is made of the military value (potential, because wholly unknown) of the death machine; hence, knowledge-is-power, and there you have the two sides of modern warfare in one coin: lust for power on the one, suicidal mania on the other.

If I am making it sound as though both male leads in this story were crazy, I am understating my case. The entire cast of characters, including all the minor ones, is as various a pack of gravely deteriorated psychotics as has ever graced an asylum. I cannot remember ever encountering before a novel in which all the characters were demonstrably, clinically, incurably insane, including the hero and the heroine, but that is the fact here. Nor is it inadvertant; not a word in this book is.

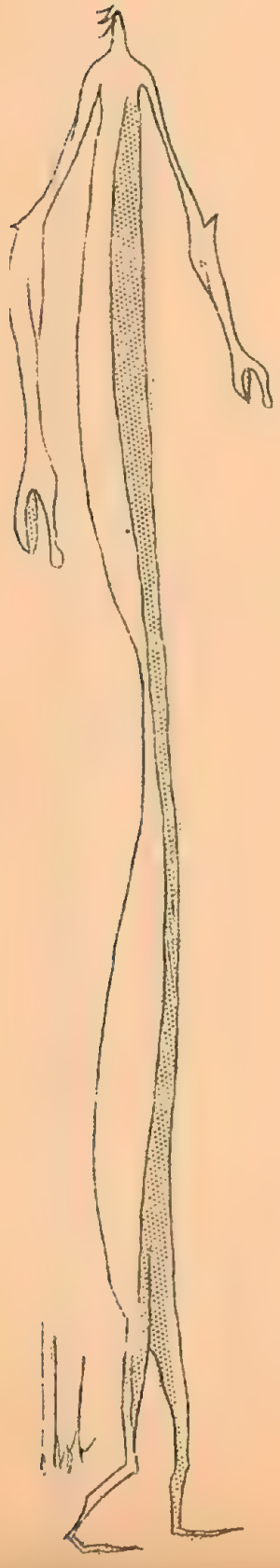
Why did Budrys populate his book solely with madmen? For two immediately visible reasons. One is embodied in the books's epigraph, a motto off a tombstone by which the author plainly says that he considers the situation in the book quite normal -- at least for our times. In other words, he means <u>you</u>, and me, and himself. The other is to be found in three pages of an imaginary Arthuriad, in tone rather reminiscent of the historical romances of Maurice Hewlett but a good deal more distinguished, in which the leading character is compared to Merlin fashioning invincible armor for Launcelot, whom he hates; this, plainly, is the pacifist parable again, applying not only to the bombsmiths and others who are accumulating the means for our forthcoming suicide, but to all the rest of us who acquiesce in it. The motive given, both for the hero and for Merlin, is pride.

(The author's preferred titles for the book, by the way, were HALT, PASSENGER -- from the epigraph -- and THE ARMIGER -- from the imaginary play. So I doubt I am laying greater stress on these two elements than they were intended to bear. Of course, it may be the wrong stress all the same.)

There are two love stories involved, one involving the hero and his girl, the other involving the secondary lead, <u>his</u> girl, the hero and a truly loathsome villain who is distinguished both by being the most pitiable character in the book, and by being no crazier than anybody else in it. This quadrangle is, of course, actually a sort of serial orgy, by virtue of the fact that every time the secondary lead comes home he is all unawares a different man; and the simpler love-story is actually a triangle for the same reason, though the hero <u>is</u> aware of that and his awareness gives Budrys a tremendous curtain-line.

My wife has noted that the two concepts of love embodied in these relationships are both markedly immature. The secondary lead's girl is almost a prototype of the all-devouring adventuress, la belle dame sans merci, the vulva-with-teeth; the hero's girl, on the other hand, is his mother. I find this perfectly in keeping; what <u>would</u> have startled me would have been finding anyone in this cast of bedlamites depicted as capable of a mature love relationship; but Budrys has better sense than that.

Then there is the question of what eventually happens to the man who dies many deaths. The author has so cunningly constructed his ambiguity here that you may finish the book perfectly convinced that you have been told plainly what finally happened to that man. Look again. The fate that <u>you</u> -- not the author -- have awarded this character may tell you a good deal about yourself, though the chances are 100 to one that you'd rather not have known.



All this material is so close to the surface that it may seem terribly obvious to Budrys, and an act of supererogation for a reviewer to lay it out so simplistically. On the other hand, there is an excellent chance that some other layer of meaning may have bulked much larger to the author; at least I have said enough, I think, to show that this seemingly straight-forward piece of yarn-spinning is in fact marvelously complex. There are some areas of the novel, furthermore, where I can see the complexity but I don't know what it's for. For instance, the hofrifying passage through the death-machine which takes place toward the close of the story has been put together to suggest that each menacing situation or death presented by the machine has its counterpart in an episode of the story proper. I can see this but I don't know what to make of it; is it perhaps only a piece of virtuosity to delight the author, like Joyce's cramming the names of more than 300 rivers into Anna Livia Plurabelle because the chapter was about a river? Since in this case the relationship between the sequence of events in the machine and the sequence of events in the story is structural, it must be doing more work than this, especially since it is strongly underscored that neither character in the machine sees what the other sees -- a situation which applies to each reader vis-a-vis the book as a whole.* (Don't get me wrong, AJ, it's more fun to guess.)

As a testament, ROGUE MOON is more than impressive; it is not only a bequest but a monument. As a promise, it is more nebulous because no author can make promises for himself, let alone for any other writer. Nevertheless I think it shows once more that a science fiction novel can be a fully realized work of art, provided that it comes from the hands of a dedicated artist who also knows the field, and who is neither frustrated by the patent indifference of his audience nor handcuffed and hobbled by an obsessive subject. Budrys is not the first man to do it, but you will not need more than one hand to count his peers; he is leaving s-f from the top step.

—James Blish

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*And this line of reasoning leads so directly to the point that I'm amazed that it ever baffled me. The passage through the death machine is structurally analogous to the book as a whole because Budrys, through the motive he assigns for going through the machine, wants to comment on the reason why a man troubles himself to produce a work of art: "To do something nobody has ever done before." The book abounds in such philosophical points, equally tightly integrated into its action.

AMATEUR ROCKETEER 4

(John Carlson, 1029 So. Main St., Rochester, Indiana - monthly - 40¢)
The editor will probably toss a mild fit at seeing his publication reviewed as a fanzine (providing he knows what a fanzine is, which is doubtful). Nevertheless this 16-page printed magazine is a sort of fanzine -- it's even an o-o (of the Amateur Rocketeers of America). This issue is devoted mostly to photos and descriptions of the ARA sponsored statewide missile firing at the Redkey Missile Range, with secondary interest centering on the first annual convention coming up in August, at Indianapolis (and with Willy Ley as one of the speakers, I might just drive down and listen to him). I get the distinct impression that they're going overboard on the convention bit, but it's a young group..... If any fans are interested in launching anything besides another fanzine, they might try a copy of this mag. (Me? I don't dig rockets, daddy-o; I'm waiting on the Dean Drive.)

PARSECTION 5

(George C. Willick, 856 East St., Madison, Indiana - published every 45 days, he says - 8 for $1) Joe Hensley's article on fannish doings in the Indiana state legislature tops the bill this time. The Indiana legislature is pretty funny to begin with (not to mention unconstitutional), and it looks like Joe will have material for quite a few articles, and I'm all in favor of it. In a dual article, Giovanni Scognamillo plumps for an International Fan Organization and Donald Wollheim shies in horror from such an idea. I think Wollheim makes his point; a big fan organization doesn't provide enough service to the average fan to make it worth his while to join. I lead off the "Fan History Series" with "The Coulson Saga"; after reading this in George's cold and misspelled print, I had some serious second thoughts about my habit of submitting unretouched first drafts to editors....maybe I should do a little rewriting. George seems to be mellowing a bit -- not much, but a bit -- in his editorial. He has proved himself and now he is basking in egoboo. Or something. Possibly he's following some Machiavellian plot of Hensley's (don't tell anyone, but George is really a robot that Hensley turned out in his spare time).

SCIENCE-FICTION TIMES 356

(Science Fiction Times, Inc., P.O. Box 115, Solvay Branch, Syracuse 9, New York - irregular - 10¢) The editors are still maintaining their fictitious bi-weekly schedule by sending our several "issues" at once. At that, they're behind schedule; this is the middle of May and the latest issue at hand is listed as "second February". (I don't object when a fanzine misses its schedule now and then, but when one has been consistently behind schedule for three years it's time the schedule was changed. Frankly, I doubt that the editors could honestly maintain a monthly schedule; they aren't doing it at present.) I've been reading SF TIMES since issue #137; it's one of the few of which I've actually purchased back issues and the only one that I have or would risk $10 at a time on a "lifetime subscription". I voted for it when it won its first Hugo and I still think -- despite some sneers of the more fannish -- that this first award was richly deserved. At the time, FANTASY TIMES -- as she was known as in them days -- was coming out regularly and performing an excellent job of keeping interested fans abreast of the rapid changes in the stf world. I was as appalled as anyone when it won its second Hugo, for by then the mag had sunk to its present level, where its chief function seems to be recapitulating the tables of contents of promags that have been purchased and read anywhere from a week to a month before the TIMES appears.

S-F TIMES' logo proclaims it to be "The Science Fiction Newspaper". At its self-proclaimed job, it is presently pretty much of a bust; there is nothing quite as dull as stale news. However, the zine still has value. For the writer of serious articles on promags (and the cantankerous individual who delights in picking flaws in serious articles about promags), a file of S-F TIMES is extremely helpful; a quick riffle of pages and you can check publication dates, price changes, and what Ray Palmer said to Horace Gold. "The Science Fiction Record" would be a much more accurate subtitle; as a record of stf events, S-F TIMES has no equal.

COMIC ART I

(Don Thompson, Room 56, 3510 Prospect Ave., Cleveland 15, Ohio - irregular - 20¢) Lupoff has been busily defending himself against charges of operating a "comic book fanzine"; even going so far as to segregate his comics material in the last issue. (I'm against this, by the way; I don't feel that the "separate but equal" doctrine will prove adequate to the changing needs of our society.) Anyway, here is a fanzine which is to be devoted to strictly comics material; not just comic books, but newspaper strips, movie cartoons, and maybe Big Little Books. The first issue is mostly a "get acquainted" offer, dealing with comics and comics fandom in general, reprinting the Comics Code and stating intentions for future issues. Possibly the best item in the issue is the name of the Comics Code Administrator: Mrs. Guy Percy Trulock. It's so fitting, somehow. I predict a pretty fair future for COMIC ART, quality-wise (as we say in the trade); I wouldn't guarantee how long it will last.

DISCORD II

(Redd Boggs, 2209 Highland Place N.E., Minneapolis 21, Minnesota - six-weekly - for letters of comment or trade -- a rider with this issue is GOLDEN APPLE #3, by Dean Grennell) DISCORD by itself is good; DISCORD with GOLDEN APPLE in combination are superb. Boggs presents his opinions of current books, fanzines, fandom and mundane items such as FAAOF picket lines, along with letters and occasional outside material. This issue, Marion Z. Bradley reviews books; past issues have featured Jim Harmon

and others. The overall picture is sort of quietly literary. I don't always agree with Boggs' opinions -- in fact, I seldom agree with them -- but they are, nevertheless, well thought out and well presented. In fact, they're probably the thoughtiest wrong opinions I've ever encountered. Grennell specializes in humorous anecdotes, and his account of his troubles with the new "National Match .38 Special Mid-Range Gold Cup" automatic was so hilarious that I even forgive him for giving a moderately good review later on to "The Magic Christian" and thereby causing me to waste 50¢. (I have read worse books -- though "The Space Frontiers" by Roger Lee Vernon is the only one I can think of offhand -- but I have never read a more boring 50¢ book. Its only virtue is that it's short; I'd never have finished it, otherwise.) But I forget myself; book reviews go to another editor. On to the fanzines. Grennell and Boggs make an excellent team; rush down to your corner post office and send off a letter of comment to Boggs.

One thing I've always wondered about these mags that absolutely refuse to accept money: one can not comment on something one has not seen. Thus, if a fansine is available only for trade or comment, how does one get the first issue? Redd?

JAMES WARREN:

RISING
YOUNG
TALENT

Here in these cartoons, showing two sides of Les Gerber, a XERO discovery is unveiled. James Warren is one of the most promising neos around and could rise swiftly out of the ranks of neodom with proper encouragement. With his constant companion Bruce Henstell, Jim was well received by many big name fans at the Pittcon.

These cartoons reveal a deft line coupled with an incisive wit. We believe Jim Warren has a great future and possibly someday, with practice and persistence, he may develop his talent and sell some cartoons to HELP!

Vote for Jim in the FANAC Poll!

— bhob

Les Gerber Seeks Advice

UNIFICATION II

(The International "Prasu" Council, Alexander Boersstraat 23 (I), Amsterdam-Zuid, Holland - no price or schedule that I can find) The aim of the group which publishes this magazine is, according to the editors, the unification of man through universal brotherhood. "We seek the Unification of like-minded men and women..." And what sort of men and women are "like-minded"? We have a collection of Theosophists, anti-vivisectionists and various believers in Oriental Wisdom and "the ancient veiled mysteries". Sometimes I wonder about things like this. I've had some contact with Pete Campbell's Federation of the East and West, and while it seems a paragon of rocklike reality in comparison with Prasu, still there is a certain fuzzy-mindedness evident.

And it seems curious that the only people who are sincerely trying to end war and promote international amity are those regarded as crackpots. One would think that the various established church organizations would be the leaders in the struggle for brotherhood, but they aren't; organized churches don't give a damn for brotherhood and have proved so repeatedly. The people who are really trying are the ones we hard-headed realists consider slightly bats. Yet when you consider that we hard-headed realists have brought the world to its present condition, there isn't much doubt as to which of the two groups should be locked up...

...is it possible that the only truly sane groups on the planet are members of the various oddball cults?

Say, Warren - I hate to tell you this -- but you're running your publishing company all wrong. Now if you'll lissen to me an blah-blah-blah-etc--!
Gerber -- get the hell out of here before I hang you by your one pubic hair!
WARREN

Les Gerber Gives Advice

SKYRACK 31&32

(Ron Bennett, 7 Southway, Arthurs Ave, Harrogate, Yorkshire, England - 6 for 35¢ or 6 for 65¢, airmail - monthly - USAgent, Bob Pavlat, 6001 45rd Ave., Hyattsville, Maryland) The British version of FANAC; format is almost identical, even to the cartoon in the upper left of the first page. Material is quite similar to FANAC -- except, of course, it's about English fans. If you're interested in English fan doings, SKYRACK is a bargain. The zine quite often carries riders; one or the other of these issues had the added bonus of MI "3, a one-sheeter by Eric Bentcliffe. Interesting chitter-chatter on Bentcliffe doings of the past few weeks.

VIPER 2

(Bill Donaho, 1441 8th St., Berkeley 10, California - quarterly - 25¢)
After making HABAKKUK into an omnibus-type fanzine, Bill compounds his crime by putting our a 40-plus page OMPAzine containing more material of general interest than most general interest fanzines can boast. One of these days Bill is going to wake up and find that he has overwhelmed fandom by sheer force of personality and that the rest of us have shamefacedly folded our mimeos and departed to a land where we can still view our creations with pride. The apas are obviously no refuge; he's started to overwhelm FAPA already and he isn't even a member yet: (Actually I'm just mad at him for making VIPER a general interest mag because if it were strictly for OMPA I would be justified in reprinting Buz Busby's satire of Kerouac "for the larger audience" but as it is Bill will get all the publishing credit. I'm envious, because this is the sort of thing I like. It may not stack up to Brandon's Kerouac-parody as far as technical artistry goes -- I wouldn't know about that -- but it's a lot funnier.)

For serious types, there is Alva Rogers' 15-page "Requiem For Astounding" -- which I assume will be continued, since he quits at the end of the Tremaine era. Noteworthy are the five reproductions of ASF covers which illustrate the article; while the illustrations do lose something in the translation, mostly due to the lack of color, they still give the reader a jolt in his sense of wonder. And when a good John Berry piece takes third place, little else need be said of the quality of the contributions. Any other editors wishing to kill off Donaho before he ruins us all may apply personally to me.

RIPPLE 12 & 13

(Ted Pauls, 1448 Meridene Drive, Baltimore 12, Maryland - monthly - 15¢) Ted is not only a relentless follow of schedule, he's also methodical, as he reveals in "13. (Imagine beginning the stencilling of a given issue before the previous issue is mailed out! Stone the crows!) He also

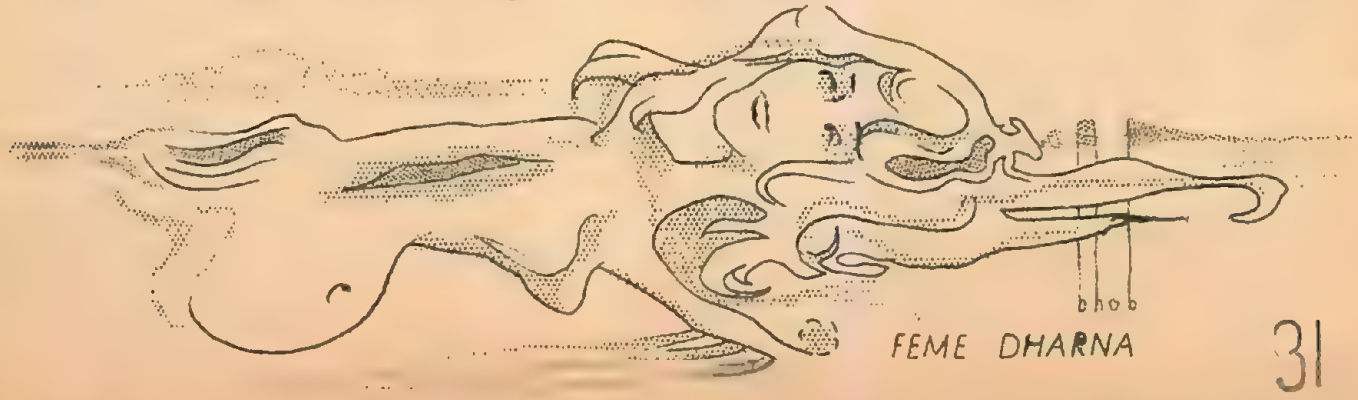
gets good material. #13 (Finnish) has items by Daphne Buckmaster, Redd Boggs, Marion Z. Bradley, Ed Gorman, Sylvia White, and the editor. (Now the mere fact that a particular item is by, say Redd Boggs, doesn't mean that it is automatically a masterpiece. But those fanwriters with good reputations didn't get them by turning out much mediocre stuff; an editor who can get work by Big Names is, by and large, going to have good material.) Anyway, all of the material in KIPPLE 13 is well worthy of the authors' reputations. #12 is smaller and, percentagewise, features more of the editor. Which is not a particularly bad thing; aside from a tendency toward asserting his opinions as certified fact, Pauls is an excellent writer. And he isn't even as thin-skinned as I thought he was.....

ESPRIT 4

(Daphne Buckmaster, 8 Buchanon St., Kirkcudbright, Scotland - irregular - 29¢ - Agent, Don Fitch, 3908 Frijo, Covina, California) Breaking entirely with "fannishness", Daphne is putting out a little literary journal for us undeveloped intellectuals. (As she herself points out in KIPPLE, most fans are intelligent people who have discovered no particular use for their talents and are more or less at loose ends.) Contents of each issue consist entirely of articles on such "non-fannish" subjects as archaeology, solitude, class and society, the teaching profession and stuff like that there. Most seem selected for their controversial nature; some fail in that they are altogether too self-consciously written just to provoke comments, while others, more solidly based, do provoke comments and provide serious ammunition for a good letter column. ESPRIT is intended to provide serious discussions; frivolous types need not apply. (Not that Daphne is a prim, precise type -- or at least I don't imagine she is -- but she feels that there are enough outlets in fandom for fannish humor.) It's not a fanzine that I would want to edit, but it is one that I thoroughly enjoy reading.

HYPHEN 27

(Walt Willis and Ian McAulay, 170 Upper Newtownards Rd., Belfast 4, Northern Ireland - irregular - 15¢) I've never been able to do an adequate review of HYPHEN. It isn't a particularly thought-provoking fanzine; one of ESPRIT's articles provokes more thought than an entire issue of HYPHEN. While it's mostly humorous, I've read funnier material in other mags. In fact, when subjected to cold analysis, there doesn't really seem to be much there. But it remains on the two or three fanzines that I read from cover to cover immediately after receiving it. It has <u>something</u> -- native Irish Blarney, possibly. Irish fandom doesn't really do anything more exotic than Indiana fandom, but somehow by the time the events are transcribed to print the Irish activities become fannish epics and the Indiana ones dull anecdotes. There is obviously more to this than meets the eye; I've seen those ads that read "Learn to Hypnotize By Mail", but I didn't think they meant....oh, they <u>couldn't</u>. I suppose it could be that all the contributors are Great Fan Writers, but why should Northern Ireland, of all places, have a monopoly of Great Fan Writers? It doesn't make sense -- of course, come to think of it, HYPHEN doesn't make sense, either. It does make some pretty fine nonsense, though.



Fourpence Each and All In Writing

by Eric Bentcliffe

There weren't any comic-books available over here back in my misspent youth, and, indeed, apart from a few which came over from the States as 'Ballast' (as occasional s-f magazines did) during war-time, I never got to see any until it was too late for them to cast their seemingly magic spell on me. I'll leave it to the audience to decide whether this is a good thing or not!

However, the discussions in XERO on the topic have led me to do a little research of my own -- into just what I was reading when most American fans were reading comic books.

There were the t'uppeny bloods, of course, the story - magazines which catered for children of varying ages. HOTSPUR, and the like, which had a fair literary standard and featured many stories with a fantasy or s-f slant. I well recall reading in this paper an extremely long serial (I think it lasted almost eighteen months) entitled LAST ROCKET TO VENUS, which still sticks in my mind as one of the most enjoyable s-f stories I've ever read -- at the time, naturally; I don't expect I'd classify it as such if I were to read it again today. And lest someone suspects me of having had a retarded childhood maybe I'd better date this yarn as near as I can, and the period I'm dealing with. I haven't any copies of HOTSPUR now, or any of the other boys papers I used to read with such gusto, so any attempt at dating must be a guess. The period 1936 to 1939 is as near as I can get...way back when I was 11 or 12 or something.

PART $\pm\sqrt{-1}$ OF THE SERIES

Catering for a slightly older boy were several semi-slick story magazines which I gradually graduated to. MODERN WONDER, BUZZER, MODERN BOY, et cetera. MODERN WONDER frequently featured articles on space-flight, and one of its regular story writers was John Beynon -- better known today as John Wyndham. I'm fairly sure that at least one of his s-f stories from that magazine was subsequently featured elsewhere as adult fare, but titles escape me for the moment. BUZZER also had several rather good s-f stories featured, and I recall a bacover cartoon strip of the Captain Future type. MODERN BOY, well, MODERN BOY featured one of the favourite characters of my youthful reading -- CAPTAIN JUSTICE.

Captain Justice wasn't exactly a Superman, he was more of a gentleman - adventurer type who liked to set wrongs right...in a scientific way. He had the usual cohort of what seems now rather stereotyped henchmen (but which didn't seem so at the time of reading), O'Malley the jovial Irishman, Midge the youngster who was always getting into 'scrapes', Len Connor the Radio Operator - Inventor, and...dear old Professor Flaznagel, who was always blowing up his laboratory and inventing super weapons which would be made off with by Foreign Spies and Evil People. Old Flazzy, as he was frequently called (behind his back) by the irrepressible Midge, was responsible for at least half of the wrongs Captain Justice had to right, but never intentionally of course.

I don't have any copies of MODERN BOY these days either, but I do have one or two of the s-f stories of my youth in pocket-book form -- as they were published in the Boys Friend Library and the Schoolboys Own Library circa 1938/1939. At fourpence each.

Two of these relics feature Captain Justice, which is why I've been able to go into some detail up above, abd leafing through them I'm almost tempted to reread the darn things. Certainly their standard of writing and logic was far greater than that of the current so-called 'original' s-f pocket books published over here, and these latter are intended for adults. The author of the Captain Justice yarns was Murray Roberts; I don't know whether this was a house-name or just one person -- the output was pretty high so it could have been a house-name.

Number 629 of the Boys Friend Library was "The Ocean Robot", published July 7th '38. Old Flazzy had invented a super robot of rather gargantuan dimensions. "A giant robot!" declared Justice. "A metal monster carrying guns, searchlights, and probably a crew of several men."

"A blinkin' walking battleship!" exclaimed the red-haired youngster. (Midge of course.) Professor Flaznagel was rather apt to spring his latest inventions on them suddenly!

However, all is not well, and evil scientist has purloined the plans and made an identical model which ravages the shipping lanes, and is only caught up with after a South American Revolution, A Kidnapping (of Midge), and much amusing adventure. Like all good stories its ending left room for a sequel, and this was forthcoming in number 633 of the Library, "The Rival Robots."

Garth Leopold, Evil Scientist, has licked his wounds and built himself several dozen more giant robots and once more he challenges Justice -- in more ways than one. He's still after that South American Republic, he has a hidden underground base up the Amazon, and manages to cause some considerable consternation before he's brought to book. "Leopold's agents have been putting in some hot work. They've smothered the town with placards and bills announcing that Justice has gone over to Leopold, and Leopold is about to advance on San Romas with an army of ten thousand men, umpteen tanks and planes, and a whole flock of robots."

Perhaps not quite the sort of stuff which would get a Hugo today, but you must admit that it was good clean fun for the kiddeywinkies. And I recall, but don't possess, several Captain Justice yarns which were verging on space-opera with Pirate Asteroids and all the thud and blunder of PLANET STORIES.

Murray Roberts' Captain Justice wasn't the only stfish character abroad in those boys books, although he was one of the best. I've unearthed another couple of the Boys Friend Library titles which I've kept for their s-f connection -- and because they were favorite reading of mine long, long ago. "The Lion At Bay" is one, by Roger Fewey. Published July 7th '39 by that Library.

This is a super-invasion yarn in which Asiatic Hordes led by the Chinese invade the United Kingdom and Europe. They do so by means of giant submersibles equipped with caterpillars for land use, wireless heat-rays, and "pipe-planes" -- these latter being a pretty fine depiction of today's jets. The land-submarines also carry large numbers of 'beetle-cars', a type of fighting machine very similar to Sam Merwin's 'pippits' in the "House of Many Worlds". The plot isn't terribly novel; the two heroes, two schoolboys at home for the hols, meet up with an inventor who has a 'triple-gun' capable of piercing the immense armour of the submersible. They help him get it to the right authorities, and see considerable action as it is tested out.

After several thousand words of WOTW type writing the Federals (Asiatics) are defeated and the boys are awarded the V.C. Put baldly like that, it doesn't sound much of a story, but leafing through it reveals that quite a few passages still evoke the old sense of wonder -- and it's a plot I wouldn't be at all surprised to see revised in the near future.

This one had a sequel, too. "The Lion's Revenge", in which our heroes, accompanied by the British Army, invade China and eventually destroy the Federals completely. The two boys undertake a Secret Service mission to penetrate the enemy headquarters, and after some quite Harrisonesque adventures succeed in their objectives. Quite frankly, I'm surprised how well these two yarns seem to have held up over the years; much of the boys fiction of those days was written in a very goshwowboy style, but these two stories in particular have a terse, quite documentary tone. I'm tempted to re-read them even now.

Perhaps more typicalof that era of schoolboy stories are four other boys pb's I have here. These are products of the Schoolboys Own Library, the series which was responsible for the famous (over here) Greyfriars School stories of author Frank Richards, which featured such characters as Billy Bunter.(later awarded a TV series of his own), Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, and their chums of the Remove.

The four titles I have here are not by Frank Richards, but by one Edwy Searles Brooks. They could, however, have been equally well written by the Greyfriars author. They tell of the adventures of a group of public (Private!) schoolboys who go off in their hols for a tour of the Solomon Islands in a yacht belonging to Lord Dorrimore, a wealthy patron and ex-boy of the School. In, unfortunately, the typical schoolboy style of the day....

> "Been talking to the pater over the phone!" he grinned. "It's all serene!"
>
> "What's all serene?" asked Handforth.
>
> "Haven't you heard?" said Pitt, in wonder.
>
> "Of course he's heard!" put in McClure. "But the ass won't believe it. And anyhow, he says he wouldn't go to the Solomon Islands for a pension!"

The stories <u>do</u> though... First of all the boys are shipwrecked, and play Robinson Crusoe on a desert isle, which is invaded by Cannibals. They fight off the cannibals only to have to face a volcanic eruption, from which they are rescued in the proverbial nick of time by Lord Dorrimore who had been hauled aboard a passing tramp-steamer at the time of the shipwreck, and who has had his yacht repaired. Dorrimore has a friend who has a dirigible named the Flying Fish which also helps in the rescue; this friend is en route to the Antarctic on a voyage of exploration -- nothing loath, the boys embark with him for the frozen South.

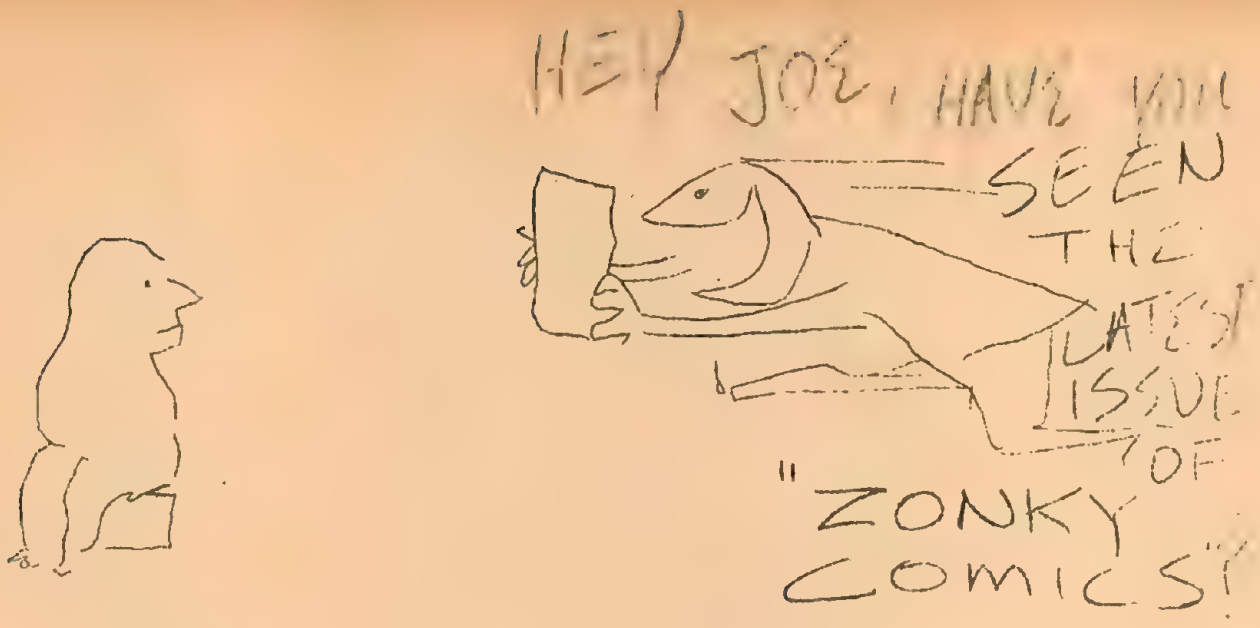
There they find a 'hot river' which leads them to not-one-but-two long-isolated kingdoms by way of an underground cavern, in which dwell Monsters. And they help to fight a war between the two kingdoms before they return to school for the next term!

They don't write stories like that any more, you might well say!!

And you'd be right. And I'm sorry they don't, for the boys, anyway. Today, the main fare offered to the kids over here seems to be similar to that offered to the kids in the States. Comic-books. And while I'm not saying that Comic Books are Not an Art Form, I'd rather see the older children, at least, reading <u>words</u> than just looking at pictures.

But maybe I'm old-fashioned, and anyway this article hasn't been written in an attempt to sermonise but rather to provide some comparison of what the older UK fans were (probably) reading when you-all were immersed in the wonders of Marvelman, and Superman.

— Eric Bentcliffe


HEY JOE, HAVE YOU
SEEN
THE
LATEST
ISSUE
OF
"ZONKY
COMICS"?

I'M
NOT
INTERESTED.
YOU'RE
NOT
INTERESTED!!

NO — I'VE
GIVEN UP
COMIC BOOKS
FOR
GIRLY
MAGAZINES.

INCREDU

As an onlooker I've been watching and reading ZERO with quite a lot of interest. I'm not a comic book collector, nor what you might call a true afficionado. I read the Marvel stories, and the DC's, but I was never one to hunt through dingy stores to find #31 of BILLY BATSON BOPS or MARVEL MEETS WONKY.

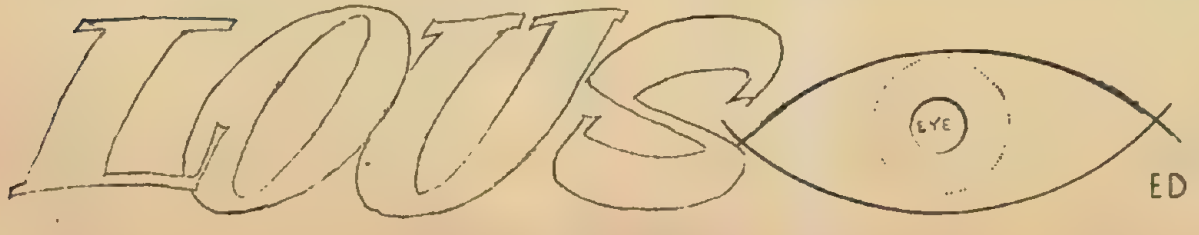
I did derive quite a lot of pleasure from comic books, though. For instance, one issue of SUPERMAN clings solidly in my memory, because on the day I received it, my grandmother was being buried, and my parents presented me with an issue to offer me a reprieve from a situation which my young mind couldn't grasp. Superman proved a superlative host, and my feelings changed from drably depressed to exited as I read through it.

But today I can no longer read SUPERMAN. And I don't think it's just because the writing staff (of DC) has changed and alleged quality met with a decline. This goes for all the "hero" comics. I find myself eyeing them all with incredulity. Why? ell, mainly, I can't identify with them, and as I go through them, I'm as passionless as a Doc Smith creation. I'm no Superman, or Green Lantern, or whoever -- I am myself, a mere human being, who, when faced with a problem must solve it any (human) way I can. I can't fly, nor can I look to a magic ring for guidance; I must bumble through a serious development with my rather low mentality working at full speed. Therefore, when I relax and look for escape in reading matter, I do want something that can uplift me from my daily problems, but also I want heroes with whom I can sympathise.

When I read about Superman (and I use him as an example because (1) he is the most popular of all super-humans and (2) he personifies the whole "Mighty Man" cliche) I think along these lines: I don't like Superman because he's arrogant. He is not human to begin with. He is an individual who was placed on earth by Fate and who, after realizing and improvising his various talents, has found that he can derive quite a lot of pleasure by keeping the native population in shackles. He's become a minor god, and fighting his foes has taken on the tones of a chess master checkmating tyro opponents.

It's true that not all these comic book idols can fly, or crash through walls, or read minds. But the ones I'm centering into view are those who solve their disastrous problems with gadgets, whether they be mental or physical gimmicks makes no difference. Because I am a human being, I like to identify with those who have problems, but must solve them as I would. I like extraordinary problems for my heroes to face, and I really don't mind if they solve their woes with some scientific or mystical power which they've either improvised or discovered in the course of the story. But I detest those who can readily challenge and defeat any foe by culling a super-weapon which awaits their call at any time, at any circumstance. It's for this reason, I believe, that Superman's editor introduced "kryptonite" -- this is an enemy, one thing which can block

PART $+\sqrt{-2}$ OF THE SERIES



BY
ED GORMAN

the otherwise all-powerful creature. But even this menacing alloy is not enough. Not for me, anyway. A human being can die a thousand ways. At any step of the way, Fate can cash him in, pick up his option and he's through. Superman and the other superhumans have no worry. Few things can stop them, and everyone knows they'll win in the finish anyway, so the suspense angle is cut down even more drastically.

Perhaps I have been tainted by what Jim Harmon calls "vainglorious pride". Perhaps I have never been a true appreciator of melodrama, no matter what form it appears in. But I don't think so. I read pulps, for example, and like them. But I enjoy contemporary stf more than I do that of, say, PLANET. Why? Well, the humans presented are much more credible. I still know they are going to win, most of the time, but they're being understandable and real, a feature of these stories which makes me want to read the yarns and enjoy them to their finish.

Stf has evolved, but I don't think comic books have. I've never read any of the old, old comic books such as those that Jim Harmon, Ted White, and Don Thompson discuss, and maybe if I did I would realize that they're talking about. But with the knowledge I have, and through the way I interpret the comics, I think that a successful comic today would be comprised of mortal-facing-suerhuman problems, and not vice-versa.

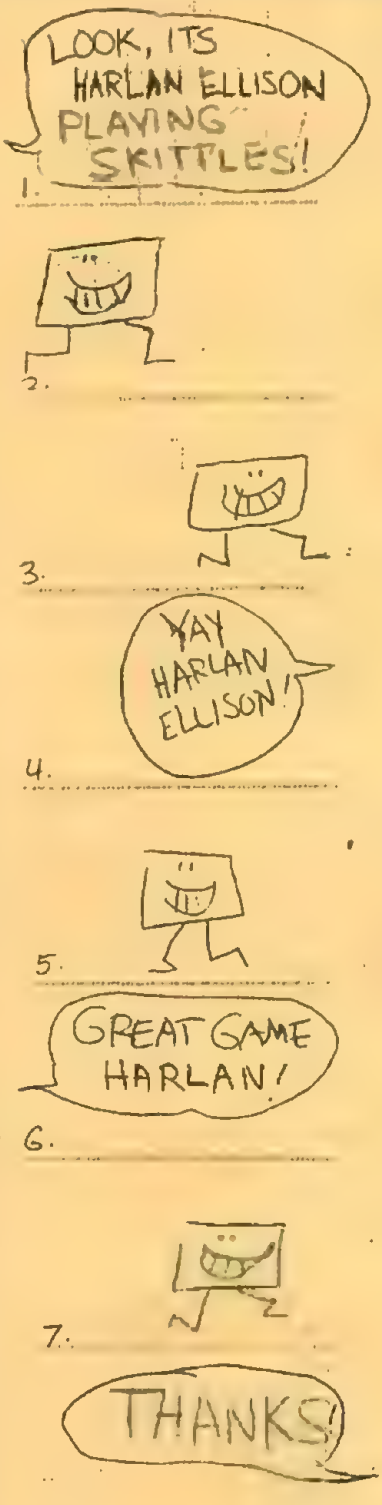
The picture is worth the proverbial thousand words. I think that's why comics are both a successful and potent medium. It's the same with television. A printed story is most often marred by failure of characterization, but on television characters are far more easily rendered believable, short of their being provided with invalid dialog and assuming that the casting director is not a nincompoop.

But basically, it is relatively easy to accept the credibility of characters on television because they move and breath before you, walking, talking, acting as homo sapiens. In comics it is the same, although in a more limited sense. The possibilities of a narrative in illustrated form are tremendous. Great things, with capable writing and illustrating, could be produced. But why waste these potential gains on fly-happy finks who have wondrous powers? I'd rather see this talent directed at human beings and their problems, rather than something I cannot understand.

Stf has always had trouble with backgrounds. The discription wasn't accurate and detailed enough for everyone to picture. But in the comics the artist interprets the writer's thoughts so clearly that an illustration evolves. Half the Sense of Wonder has been captured right here; the other half depends on the characters. See what I mean?

This is not a complaint against Jim Harmon, Ted White, or Don Thompson. Their "All in Color for a Dime" articles have been greeted with pleasure from this quarter. Rather, this piece is a conclusion, which I have reached because of comic book reading and the aforementioned articles.

Finding specific cases of what I mean is unfortunately difficult, but I think that a more subdued EC would be a fitting example of what I have in mind. Balance



the accent between characterization and mood-effect and you've got a winner. Be lopsided on either one, and the end result is sterility. And by that I mean exactly what the word implies.

There are, of course, sharp limitations in comics. The dialogue must be precise and must follow the story line. But EC did it for their Bradbury adaptations, and many others have done it at various times, in various publications.

And speaking in dollars-and-cents, I think that a comic book such as I would design would be successful, even though it would be published for the, umm, "the "gourmets" of the comic book followers. I know that SUPERMAN is popular, and probably will be for a long time to come. But Superman and all the other superhero types appeal primarily to children and to those adults-in-term-of-years whose taste has never grown up.

Attempts at adult-directed comic books have always failed in the past, but I believe that this has been due to poor execution, distribution, etc, rather than to any invalidity of the basic idea.

What I am intimating is a fairly credible comic, with good writing and choice illustrating. Something not necessarily pitched at the immature mentality.

See you in the letter column.

39

— Ed Gorman

a nostalgic moment in the summer of 1960 when harlan played skittles in greenwich village all alone one afternoon after he discovered that his audience had only been waiting for a bus and just rode off...captured here by andy reiss

HE SWOOPED ON HIS VICTIMS AND BIT THEM ON THE NOSE:

AN ODD LETTER FROM MR. AVRAM DAVIDSON

Lupophoi:

You will probably get this days later because I've got no stampu and better things to do with my money--the few coins between me, starvation, and that messianically distant era when Randy Garrett starts paying his debts--than to buy stampu with it for letters of comments (I've just learned to call them LOCs, hee hee, but am too shy for such ingroup terminology) on fanzines.

Thanks for asking me to write something for XERO, but (a) I can't think of anything (b) I have no right to take the time from what I should be doing professionally (letters aren't Writing!) and (c) there are a few publications which are ahead of you in case I decide I have both time and subject matter.

Commend you on layout and general appearance, sometimes much too good for the subject matter (Captain Crudd Comics--reeeaallly). Too bad that such a good cartoonist as Andy Reiss has to suffer from reproduction difficulties (give him my regards and my address and ask him to communicate if he likes). (I mean, I'd like him to.) [Andrew Joel Reiss, Avram Davidson's address is 410 West 110th Street, NYC 25.]

Now, leave us see. J. Blish, gentleman, savant, scholar (writer, too) attributes the Amis "marked bias for the GALAXY type of story" to the fact that "Amis sent extended questionnaires to many writers...returns came largely from the Pohl-Ballantine-Gold Axis, thereby heavily skewing the data Amis had to work with." Which may be--is, for all I know o contrare. Let me note for the record that, while I've sold no stories to Messrs.

Polh and/or Ballantine, I did sell five to GALAXY, of which either all [illegible] or four were in print at the time Amis sent out his queries. I know he sent them to, among others, Wm. Tenn and Robt. Sheckley,(much more frequent GALAXY writers, of course; bigger by far names, of c.) but none to me. So he was exercising Selectivity even before his replies could come in. His privilege. I hope nobody thinks my pride was hurt, because it was.

I think JB is not quite correct in utterly condemning SF writers who include SF writers as characters. This seems quite legitimate, providing the characterization is done so well that no "key" is needed. Surely no one missed much essential in not knowing (as I did not, at first) that Somerset Maugham's "Cakes and Ale" includes Thomas Hardy and Hugh Walpole.

The cartoon by "bhob" captioned "Even kings must live by nature" reminds me of my grandmather's expression for the water closet. A former subject of His Apostolic Majesty, Francis Joseph, she called it "Where the kaiser goes on foot."

In re Margolin on Deckinger on "Psycho" and "Caligari"--anybody remember a movie pitcher from mid-30's or a bit earlier, which it was entituled "Mad Love"? It was made abroad, I think in France, though I was at that time incapable of recognizing French when I heard it. The only English lines were delivered by Edmund Brophy, bald, hubbin-nosed little American who--in this country--played comic hoods--only in "Mad Love" he was a strangler. Guillotined. Peter Lorre played a physician who, if I recall, was going nuts (a) for dearth of some popsie and (b) on general principles. This was one of the first films to use such tricks as Unseen Voices (if you know whattamean), Rippling Vision, etc. Not physICIAN, dopey: surgeon. Yes. The popsie loved a pianist who had his hands crushed in a train wreck just as the axe plopped on Brophy's nape. Lorre promptly took off Brophy's hands and grafted them onto the wizard of the keys. Who soon began to strangle people... I forget how it ended. Why do I bother? Well, I, uh, like, didn't ever see either Caligari or Psycho, and I got to talk about something, don't I?

Margolin speaks of the British film DEAD OF NIGHT. I quite well remember the ventriloquist/dummy part--there were three or four stories, unconnected, in the picture --but not the bits BM mentions as accompanying it--spook mirror, ghost boy. "gold incident." /Err, Margolin's "reference" to a "gold incident" was just a typo. What he originally wrote was "golf incident./ But I am sure one of the sequences contained Thomas Mitchell as "Septimius Podger, Professional Chiromancer," who was reading palms at a party, guessing the unguessable, predicting the unpredictable-but-just-then-proven-true, until he came to the palm of Edgar G. Robinson--& refused to say what he'd seen. EGR bugged him until he got the one word, "Murder." Wandered the dark streets of London wondering whom he was going to kill--and for crisesakes WHY?--this EGR being a gentle type, in this film. Till one night he met whom but S. Podger on London Bridge, had words with him, and knocked him fatally into the mucky old Thames. Will someone correct or corroborate my belief that this bit was based on a story by Oscar Fingall O'Flaherty Wilde?

/"I will," says Larry M. Harris. "The Septimius Podger story was not in DEAD OF NIGHT, but THE NIGHT HAS A THOUSAND EYES. It was based on a story by "George Hopley (Cornell Woolrich) of which I have a copy which you may borrow if you wish."/

BM also uses "unbeknownst". The use of this odd form seems increasing. Is it legitimate? Why won't "unknown" do? I've also seen "unbeknown." Hmm.

Before the Comic Books as a genre unto themselves appeared, lo, there was FAMOUS FUNNIES. Remember? This simply reprinted the Sunday sheets of various well-known funnies in each issue. Among them was one called "Nipper" and one called "Desperate Ambrose." I seem to recollect dimly that Ambrose had appeared in some newspaper

the NY area--maybe in my local Yonkers one--but long years before I saw it in FF. "Nipper" I'd never seen nor have I seen it since. I regarded it as a superior strip, without compeers, unique in its flavor, zipper, devoid of funny-paper or comic-strip cliches. It dealt with the doings of a small boy, who wore shorts--it always seemed Summer--and lived in a very small town. Can anyone tell me anything at all bout "Nipper"? Ambrose was also a small boy, but highly stylized. He was always threatening to do something Desperate. The father of the family was preternaturally tall and thin... About two, three years back Jean Shepperd asked, Did anyone remember the comic strip in which everyone was always sitting down to eat tripe? At once I got the picture. I could see it clearly. The tripe looked like black spaghetti, was in bowls, and there were loud complaints...But I couldn't recall the Name, dammit, it was haunting, frustrating...and if Shephard ever said it, I missed it. He is Very Good, but I can only take small doses of him, somehow. Wellsir, it now stands in my mind that Desperate Ambrose may have been the funny wherein the family seemed always about to sit down to tripe. Anybody confirm or deny? Anybody able to tell anything about Desp. Ambrose?

There were LOTS of good funnies in the days before Dick Tracy blight spread far and wide; and so many shich I never see mentioned in the histories and articles. Who remembers when Blondie and Dagwood were just characters in Dumb Dora? the dowager Mrs. Bumstead being Violently Opposed to their marriage. I'm quite certain that I remember the first appearance of Popeye the Sailor in Thimble Theatre (it would have been not earlier than c. 1929, or I couldn't have been able to read the dialogue): he came and took Olive Oyl away from her brother Castor's friend, Ham Gravy. Castor was as short as Olive was tall, but more than this I can't remember. And nothing about Ham Gravy remains in my mind.

Tailspin Tommy? Boo. Who remembers Mescal Ike, the cowboy who hung around in a general store which had funny signs hung about it? and who had an elderly pal with jutting chin whiskers who was always whittling? Who remembers fat Clarence, and his pretty, slim wife? Who remembers Brutus? and his female--wife? friend--Cleo? Who, Pa's Son-in-Law? The s-i-l was an Englishman, Cedric (of course), an asful simpering boob with a monocle and a long cigarette-holder. Pa was always beating him up. Pa's name was Lemuel Spluttorfuss (oh Lupoffs what are you DOing to me? things I haven't thought of in YEARS). The horses and cows in Brutus had, instead of hooves, long flat feet. And the favorite expression was "Gleeps."

Happy Hooligan (Opper? Gropper?) is well-remembered, but who remembers a companion strip that ran along the top or bottom of the full HH sheet (a common practice in those days)--Hee Haw And Her Name Was Maude? Maude was a mule. I was (if you'll excuse the expression) cutting up some old touches a while back with Sandy Garrett, and we were trying to think of the name of the kid or Had-Was-It in Parlor, Bedroom, & Sink (I may have that all wrong). Kid always wore a long baby robe but spoke adultly, had a huge nose, and was always being kidnapped by a hulking villain named Fagin, a tattered-tramp figure, who had whiskers not unlike Moon Mullins's Uncle Willy (Lady Plushbottom was in those days Miss Emma...no, dammit, Lamy--yes--Miss Emmy Schmaltz, kept a boardinghouse, and her favorite expression was "I'll smack your sass" face." Does she still say it?). The kid in the nightie bore these abductions with patience and fortitude, remarking only, from time to time, sadly, "Fagin, yous is a viper." Don't know why the beak. His natural parents (on the rare occasions we were permitted to see them, or they to see the kid) were normal-looking, and very very young.

Poor, too. I think they had to cook on a gas-ring which led via rubber-tube to a gas-jet. Well, I couldn't remember the kid's name. But Randy could. Bunky. Hey. all you good people out there in Funny Paper land--anybody remember Bunky?

...Lupoff, yous is a viper...

Later, much later, there was Peter Piltdown (this was over 20 years ago, mind, before Piltdown man was kicked out of the Evolution Club for cheating at cards), a sort of forerunner of B.C. Only it was people just with kids, one of whom was a bit speech-impedimented and a bit of a feeb, too, but kep saying that he loved "alimals." ("aminals", etc.) And as for your low-down, no-count, trashy Bat Man --any of yez remember the ORIGINAL Bat Man? He appeared in Hair-breadth Harry and stalked Harry's girl, Belinda--and just about anybody else stalkable, I guess. He wore a stovepipe hat and a long black cloak, and he lurked. Jesus*, did he ever lurk! In tree, like for instance. And then he swooped on his victims, bit them on the nose, and the nose then swelled up to horrid red proportions (I am not making this up). I freely admit that this scared the piss out of me--the only thing of its kind which ever did. It may be that I was still too young to read when I was looking at it, seem to recall its being read to me.

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*I refer, of course, to Jesus ben Sira, author of the book of Ecclesticus. Ecclessiasticus? You could do better?

You can see that we had wholesome comics in them days.

How is the re-run of Barnaby doing these days? I was crazy for it when it first appeared, before WWII, but don't even glance at it now. Time and past to secure, and get back to THE PRICE OF BLOOD, which maybe Ellery Queen will buy, and so enable me to put off dissolution for yet another fortnight. So goodbye, thanks for XERO, and you understand why I can't comply with your request that I write something four you.

Peace and Blessing.

Avram Davidson

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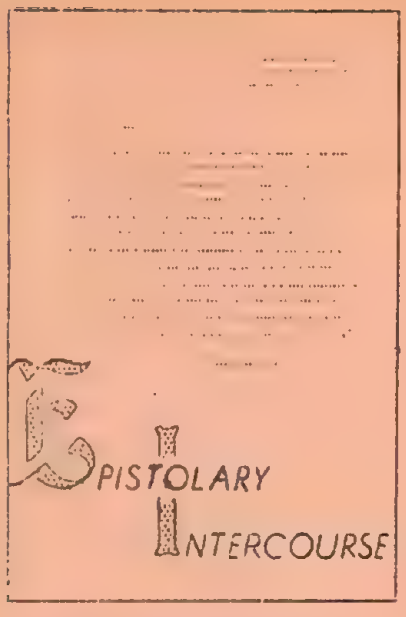
Dear Mr. Davidson, Sir:

Sad we are that you found it needful to turn down our request for material for XERO. However, any time in the future that you still cannot write for this magazine, feel free to not-write for us in the manner of the preceding pages.

Yours regrettingly,

Pat & Dick



conducted by Pat

james blish

(P.O. Box 278, Milford, Pike County, Pennsylvania)
There seems to have been a slight louse-up in the last page of my Amis review which I would like to set straight: it is in what was supposed to be a list of three different kinds of use of s-f writers as characters in s-f stories. The Merrill example is all right; then, I was trying to say, there was Leiber satirizing Hubbard and van Vogt; finally, Hubbards own use of somebody transparently named "Chan Davies" as the villain of a story. The judgement that the story itself was particularly revolting applies to the Hubbard yarn, not to the Leiber, which I admire.

I am most interested in Harris on Sturgeon. The complaint he cites against VENUS PLUS X -- that the ending is mechanical -- seems to me to be far from that book's chief deficiency. Its main drawback for me is that it has no structure of any kind. As Ted Cogswell once pointed out, it strongly resembles one of those interminable 19th Century Utopian novels in which the action consists of taking the hero to tour the gas works, the balloon factory, the giant telegraph center, etc. One impression usually conveyed by such novels was that the future society in question had even less artistic taste than our own; I get the same feeling from VENUS PLUS X, particularly in the creche section, where in addition to the saccharine statue and dancing children, Sturgeon falls back on the artsy-craftsy kind of thing the southern Agrarians were trying to sell us 20 years ago. The little satires of contemporary suburbia are fine stuff and might have been the germs of a first-class mainstream story; but the science-fiction is a failure, I'm afraid. It's a shame, for the field has no finer artist when he's in top form.

bob briney

(Math Dept., 2-380, M.I.T., Cambridge, Massachusetts)
Of particular interest were the Blish comments on Amis. He has said the same thing before (in PITFOS), but at less length and without the specific references to passages in the book. One of the best things about the book, to my mind, is that it is good enough, and important enough, to generate much comments and analysis of this type.

Larry Harris column was also interesting, and I hope he continues the discussion of Sturgeon's works in future issues. Would also like to see his comments on the recent SOME OF YOUR BLOOD, and also on the two Sturgeon "oddities," THE KING AND FOUR QUEENS and I, LIBERTINE. [No sooner said than done.] And, of course, the short stories. Sturgeon is one of the few writers in the sf field whose stories are not only worth reading but almost demand rereading.

Also enjoyed Chris Steinbrunner's nostalgic survey of movie serials. I still remember the trips to the theater on Saturday afternoons to see what new tortures the evil Doctor Daka (played by J. Carroll Naish) had concocted for Batman and Robin. The pit of alligators in his secret laboratory beneath the Tunnel of Horrors in the amusement park, his zombie machine, etc. And then there were several "Phantom" serials, and Superman, and "The Great Alaskan Mystery"...

Re: the comments on movies in E.I. I'm glad to see that someone brought up DEAD OF NIGHT. (I would have, if I'd thought of it.) A fine example of insanity as seen from the inside... And I agree with Dick Ellington about ISLE OF THE DEAD. No

monsters, no ghosts, no vampires, no blood and gore, just a nice, gentle story to whiten the hair a little... One thig I remember vividly is how much shock-effect was achieved merely from sounds. No wails or screeches, either, but perfectly ordinary sounds -- sounds which shouldn't have occurred, but which the audience damn well knew would occur, having been led step-by-step by the plot to expect them.

ajay hudrys

(631 Second Ave., West End, New Jersey)
ZERO 4 is very impressive. I admire the production and editing. And I'm knocked out by Bhob Stewart's skill.

I don't feel qualified to comment on -- as distinct from appreciate -- any of the parts of "Triple Tangents" or "An Open Letter", but I like this sort of article, and the concerns it reflects.

I think Larry Harris is quite right about the strength of the central idea of MORE THAN HUMAN. It's so good that even Mark Phillips, had he ever been able to think of it, couldn't have quite padded it to death. Otherwise, I have little to say about "From the SF Shelf." If I were Bob Silverberg, Robert F. Young, or Jerry Sohl, of course, I might have more to contribute to this study of Theodore Sturgeon.

Blish on Amis was a nice, clear note of sanity on the subject. I noted some other lapses in Amis; for example, whenever he summarizes a story, then apologizes for not remembering the title and author, he's usually slighting Phil Dick. But these are, as Jim points out, minor quibbles. NEW MAPS is a demanding job rather well done

In fact, I'm much less troubled by Amis' bias for Sheckley than Jim is. Sheckley never talks about his work or his motives, and rarely mixes into the large kaffeeklatsches that go on all the time among other professionals. The result is that much progress and hard work has managed to get by unnoticed, especially since most of the brilliant critical insights in this field -- with one or two significant exceptions -- are gained by bending the ear at these gossip-mongerings. Sheckley badly needs critical re-evaluation; if he was not as good as his original notices, he was never as insipid as he was later made out to be, and he is a good deal closer to John Collier now than he once was to O. Henry. He may not be a science fiction novelist -- frankly it's hard to tell, the way that portions of his career have been managed -- but he can handle any other length in sf, and I have read one Sheckley adventure novel that I'm sure Jim would find even more interesting than I did. It may be that Amis, standing well away from the staple critical notions that exist here, has a better chance to notice who is playing well and who is merely dragging the same old bow across some badly slackened strings. Amis has some decidedly peculiar notions about where the important talents in sf lie, true -- or rather, about how much attention should be paid to people like Kuttner, Kornbluth, and Heinlein, or Sturgeon -- but I don't think he can be fooled into seeing talent where there is none. I naturally -- and selfishly -- believe that Jim can't either, but Sheckley is so quiet -- and has no self-appointed press agent working for him -- it's easy to forget how many years it's been since the AAA Ace stories.

roy ehert

45

(410 E. Washington, Urbana, Illinois)
ZERO 4 -- not to mention ZERO 3 -- has prompted me to hurdle my customary no-loc-during-evenings-before-exams policy and comment.

Yes. Comment is such a dry, loose word. Rave should be confined to Winchell columns;

plaudit sounds like the Saturday Review; maybe I want to point with alarm (concern). Maybe I like it.

In my forthcoming /low current/ fmz column in Parsection, I deal with the very things Donaho, Busby, and Shaw are scratching about in: the personal fanzines. In a burst of brilliance, my fertile (i.e., well manured) brain decided to call this type of fan an idzine. The double meaning -- id and idea -- should be obvious (probably why I spelled it out). The term is a useful one, I think, and I should be happy to see idzine catch on in fannish isiam. Yes.

To me, the incessant jabber about 7th fandom or 8th fandom or whatever fandom is depressing. My flawless method of determining what fandom we're really in goes something like this:

Take any three genzines and analyze the 14 articles, letters, and editorials therein concerning which is the current red fandom. If more than 75 agree on which fandom we're theoretically moving out of, that's the fandom we are now in. Run spot-checks every six months or so, and when the consensus is that we are moving into the "next fandom" we are actually in the one we thought we were moving into when we were in the one we were in to "times" ago.

In other words...no; never mind.

Blish is very irritating in his review of NEW MAPS OF HELL; he manages to climb over and around and -- very nearly -- through the only cogent issue: was Amis right in his pronouncements on the relative worth of various stf writers? I think Blish's opinion on this would be more important than a three-page grab-bag of loose ends busily being uncluttered.

Harris is caught with his first-draft down in his article on Sturgeon's first drafts, I'm afraid; two proofs of this are embodied in the article: (1) the statement at the (ambitious) beginning that he (Harris) will review the complete works when he actually only touches on the novels, and (2) the statement at the beginning that he (Harris) will reach some conclusions. /Re-read the column, poet. Harris' prospectus was for the (two-instalment) series on Sturgeon, not lastish's column alone. Oddly, several others than yourself also seemed to skip the closing paragraphs./

I would suggest that the best way to replenish fandom with new blood might be to have Coulson or Tucker or Boggs or some semi-official "spokesman" issue a statement about Eisenhower's communist background. Then the publicity follow-up could mention something about privately-circulated, privately-written, privately-printed magazines, available only to an "in-group" and used also to indoctrinate neophytes into the esoteric ways of S*T*F (publicly translated as the Socialistic Truth Federation, or something...) Robert Welch got 19,000 paid subscribers to his fanzine that way....

anthony boucher

(2643 Dana Street, Berkeley 4, California)

I very much enjoyed ZERO 4--partly for the startling experience of finding myself in complete agreement with Blish on a matter of criticism (& in a minority position at that), but also for the quality of the articles: Harris on Sturgeon, Thompson on comics, & especially Steinbrunner on serials.

If 9th Fandom is characterized by its interest in comics, I may be a member without knowing it. Please continue this fine archeological criticism. /Looka that, even those Fabulous Berkeley Fen are coming around./

shaggy critics

(1809 Second Avenue, New York 28, New York)
I read and liked Triple Tangents... well, I didn't exactly go ape over them (and wonder what the roots of an expression like that are!) but they were interesting. "Certainly anyone who tries to plow through the new zines without pausing to think, reflect, and assimilate is going to be left with only a confused impression of a rather peculiar mishmash." - (Donaho) Yeah, I know. It's the assimilation that gets me; I have an atrocious memory, every morning my brother has to introduce himself to me. As for F.M.'s comment re younger fans not going in for comic book discussions because they have no basis for nostalgia, I have no basis for misty eyes; before I read you articles I had an almost nonexistant knowledge of the Marvels, Captain America, the Human Torch, etc., but I liked and enjoyed the accounts of them, probably more than the actual comics themselves --- the chaff tends to be eliminated. Besides, old comics are probably more available than Buz thinks; I used to get all sorts of lists in my old E.C. days. I took the meaning of sophisticated sercon as restrained enthusiasm, and Buz' arguement in regard to the nonexistance of "sophisticated sercon" is rather ridiculous. It's like saying there's no such thing as grey because black and white exists.

I don't know what Hal Lynch has against small clubs; /either do I./ the Fanoclasts, for example, seem to be working admirably, and in a case of a small club I think that the outsider would have a much better chance to be absorbed. There's much more attention focused on him, and he can't get lost in any crowd. And if the Fanoclasts are indicative of a small club it would seem that small clubs are more efficient. /Can the Fanoclasts really be considered a small club, Steve? Meetings at our place have been averaging about twenty people./ When I look at the Xero contents page I note that while Xero isn't a club zine there's quite a lot of member contributors, as for pet projects there's the Willis fund; while it is receiving general fandom support it has most of its roots in New York.

Just how does one spray pests with DDT --- tell them they're not wanted? In some cases this would seem to be unjustifiably cruel, some pests are harmless, and if they don't hurt, I don't see why they should be hurt. In this, the exclusive aspects of a sf club is desirable. Besides, what happens if they come in droves, like the motorcycle set that invaded the Shaws last summer? /When a similar thing happened to us this fall we told them that we had another appointment in two hours and we shooed them out. There is no reason to be tactful if you never want to see these people again./

The Reiss cartoons were great in their informality. I particularly admired the layout arrangements of paneling on page 25. The Bhob illo opposite it was just too much, it had a lot in the aisles. I quote in whatever restroom I happen to be in .. I get plenty of oddlooks, but ...

I think that one of the reasons for the elimination of the movie serials is the time element: theater owners want to get as many showings of the main features as they can get, and serialstake up valuable minutes.

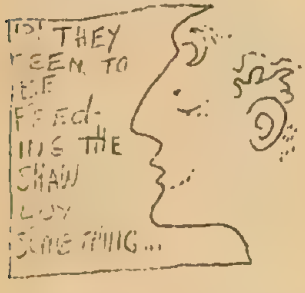
There's also the matter of format -- no matter what theater you happen to be in they always have two full length pictures, the coming attractions, news, and maybe a short feature if it's appropriate to a season, or holiday -- but no more than that.

harry warner

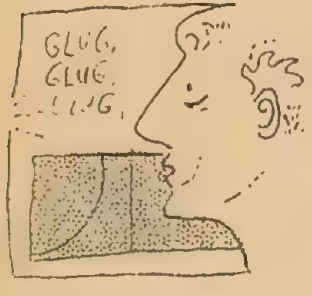
(423 Summit Avenue, Hagerstown, Maryland)

Of course I got an enormous charge out of the fourth ENO, and here I'm writing about it within three weeks of receipt instead of three months, which just proves how rapidly I'm recuperating from backsliding, depending on how you feel about fandom at the moment. The mimeography is better than I'd expected from your description of the troubles, and undoubtedly is perfect in comparison with what the next HORIZONS will look like. I'm determined to resume my own duplication after depending on White and Ivey for nearly a year, and the thought of struggling with that mimeograph has depressed me already.

I'm sorry that you yielded far enough to criticism to bind this issue in piggyback fashion, since I'm opposed to segregation in any form. I decided to make amends myself the best way I could by reading the comic book section before the rest of the magazine. I can't in truth think of too much to say about this portion, except the general observation that you're serving a most valuable function in preserving facts that might get lost to the world in the next few decades, and just think how collectors will bless you a half-century from now, when the dime comics of the 1930's and 1940's are as rare and expensive as the dime novels today, and ENO is the only major source of information about the genesis of the characters and the names of the writers and so on.



The topic of trends in today's fanzines is pretty well exhausted by now. Everyone seems to agree that the best ones are less faanish than the best ones were a couple of years ago and that mundane matters are more prominent in several fine recently-introduced fanzines and I imagine that it will be another five years before we can be sure whether anything more significant than this is happening. I understand that Wollheim practically demolished the numbered fandoms concept in an issue of SFC which I missed, and I'm rather glad of it; this is a matter for historians to figure out, not the people who are contemporary.



I didn't read THE MAPS OF HELL from beginning to end. But it occurred to me that most of the criticisms directed at it were prompted by disappointment that it wasn't a history of the prozines, a task which Amis obviously didn't attempt. Aside from that, there has been only the inevitable carping about favorite authors being snubbed. Too few fan reviewers have emphasized the most important thing of all, how lucky we were that this first major study of its kind was written by someone who likes sf.

Larry Harris' article is a complete success, in that it almost made me rush out and try to locate the Sturgeon books missing from my possession. I don't think he's a particularly good writer but he has a superb imagination and maybe the quality of the writing can be blamed on his laziness, if he creates stories as indicated here.

The Steinbrunner article was by far the finest thing in the issue. Blackhawk films have several chapters of Pauline available on [illegible] I believe, and I'll probably invest as soon as I've finished paying bills left over from the fall of man. But I wonder if

the movie serial is quite as extinct as claimed here. Reading this article inspired me to tune in last Saturday afternoon on a Washington television program entitled "Serial Theater". It included one chapter each from King of the Carnival and Zombies of the Stratosphere. I couldn't decipher the copyright date on the credits of either, but from the autos, certain things in the dialogue, and similar clues I'd judge that they must have been produced not longer than five years ago, and probably more recently. Neither was very good; the former is a combination of carnival life and a plot against the nation from some foreign power, while the latter involves a collaboration between a mean earth man and people on Mars who want to move Mars into earth's orbit. But Zombies does have some nice trick photography of a man who flies around with the help of a little jet strapped to his shoulders.

/Heck, the army just let out photos of a gadget like that without trick photography. I hope it was real, anyhow. As for still getting to see serials, Gene DeWeese writes that he recently saw a movie called Satan's Satellites that was a condensed serial, of, he thinks, King of the Rocket Men. With it was The Missile Monsters, but this was so bad Gene had to leave, so we'll never know what it was./

The letter section read very well despite all the eliminating and cutting that you needed to do to get it down to this size. I suspect that it was almost as much work to prune and edit to this extent as it would have been to publish two or three times as many pages of letters. Comparison with HABAKKUK in this department is difficult, because the material in XERO doesn't lead to branching-out discussions like much of the contents of HABAKKUK.

/This could well be true, but we plan to continue to hold down the length of the letter section. Possibly someday there might be a special letterzine-issue of XERO, but this is not too likely./

bob to otto pfeifer

(2911 N.E. 60th Street, Seattle 15, Washington)

Fust off this business of 9th Fandom. Bill Donaho brings out the new non-fannish trends in fanzines. Well, these zines have been around for awhile in one form or another, but can you really call them non-fannish? After all, what is fannish and what is non-fannish? (Probably an assinine and neo-fannish question.) I think that anything that appears in a fanzine whether secon or not, is fannish to some degree. Even tho more and more zines go along with this tide, I don't believe the fanzines of old are on their way out. Fandom is going through a trend, as everything must. The question is how far, and how long will it continue. I find great interest in these "new" fanzines, but I have decided to keep WRR going in its old, zany style. No matter how sercon zines get, I believe there will be a place for zines like WRR. Besides, we couldn't be serconnish if we tried.

Now to Buz: He is quite definitely correct about Seattle being a center of fannish activity since 1950. From that year on, Seattle fans have been foisting all sorts of activity upon fans. Berkeley, of course, is the present center and should be for quite some time.

This brings me to Larry Shaw's remark about Seattle being on the way up. I would like to know what he uses for the basis of that statement. If he is correct, then it will be quite interesting living in Seattle during the next few years. Care to move in with us?

/I think you're thinking about Dick's statement in XERO 2 that Seattle is "moving up." But as for that idea of moving in...are you talking to Larry or to me? And if you mean me, me alone or Dick too?/

george c. willick

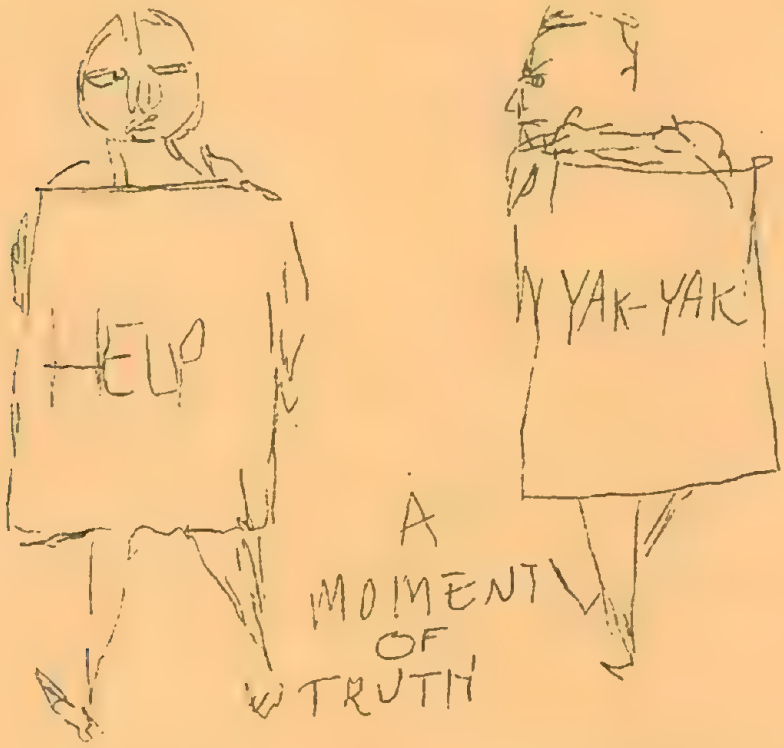
(856 East Street, Madison, Indiana)

To speak frankly and sincerely, I think Castillo, for the first time in his life, hit the nail on the head. However, while not wishing to participate, I would like to continue to observe Ninth Fandom, which is already two years old, in this...one of its minor whirlpools of adult chaos. I don't defend your right to acclaim Ninth Fandom official but I'll defend to the death your right to try. Paradox? /Paradox? Huh? What did you say?/

gregg calkins

(1484 East 174g South, Salt Lake City 5, Utah)

Reason for this card is in note of Castillo's card in the last issue...you know, the one with all that jazz about "...all around you is a society seething, begin not only for a critical evaluation of its fundamentals but for a reconstruction of the very fundamentals..." Is he nuts or something? People like that don't read fanzines--they sit in beatnik coffee houses and whine about the way life is treating them. People who read [illegible] in particular and fanzines in general are interested in the things fanzines produce, including a discussion of comic books, not a critical reevaluation of society's fundamentals. I think Castillo's not quite in phase with the rest of the world anyhow....



/Ah, but Art is here in New York now, and he's also back as guest editorialist in this issue of ..ERG as well. Whether Art will continue to write to/for ..ERG remain to be seen, but he has already supplied us with a slogan unmatched in the history of fannish publication. As a matter of statistics, about ten people saw fit to comment on Art's last card, either orally or in writing. Two agreed with him -- George Willick above and Martha Cohen. The opinions of the remainder were all just about epitomized by Gregg except for Marion Zimmer Bradley and Don Thompson, whose views were a little bit more violence-oriented./

dick ellington

(2162 Hillside Avenue, Walnut Creek, California)

I like the Ace Double-Novel idea for separating the comic book stuff. It definitely provides the separation and I think that's useful. There are a goodly number of people who are undoubtedly just not interested in the comic book stuff and this kind of a break should shut them up for good.

I notice you seem to be adopting the general material theme -- I mean more so than before -- I am noticing this sort of thing again as it sort of bears out what I was telling Les Nirenberg that mayhap there just ain't a need for a general circulation in fanzine format for non-fans because so many of today's fanzines are turning more and more to general material and are actually more suitable for non-fans than the previously ultra-fannish deals. Actually, this is the sort of policy I would have followed with FIJAGH had I been able to keep the damn thing up. Oh well, one of these days....

The Triple Tangents bit was quite godd also. Did you ask for these three opinions or did they just come in this way? /Busby's article came in as it appeared, unsolicited; Donaho's was a letter, revised into an article on request but with only the slightest changes; Shaw's was written after having seen the other two./ They complemented eachother beautifully only again I find myself with nothing left to argue with, really, in any of them.

The same pretty much holds true for Blish--I hope F&SF doesn't corner the Blish-review market. I mean I don't get F&SF except occasionally and I do get XERO and I like to read Blish reviews. It's funny though that I should find his general-circulation stuff so interesting because I certainly thought very little of the overly-Freudian, Deeper Significance stuff he was doing in del Rey's thingumbob a few years back.

Lynch makes a number of good points, only a minor few of which I disagree with and they're not worth quibbling about. As an active member of PSFS which must be admitted to be a successful club, he can also give with a Know Whereof He Speaks.

Harris on Sturgeon also meets with complete approval. Actually, whether or not this would stand as the single best piece in the issue by more-or-less objective standard I certainly enjoyed it more than anything else I read. But then again I am a Sturgeon fan and by Ghu, damn few stf authors can say Dick Ellington is a fan of theirs. And while I might find myself mumbling argumentatively unsuccessful phrases re: Blish-on-Sheckley, I can't utter a peep at Harris-on-Sturgeon.

And Bob Coulson's reviews were excellent too, which leaves you batting 1.000 so far, only I can't let this sort of thing continue so I will say that I enjoyed Chris Steinbrunner's article least of all those in this issue. On the other hand I must grudgingly admit that I did read it through and it was well written and the subject matter is certainly worthy of an article this size. I'm also glad to see somebody latch onto Chris for fanzine material. I've always thought he is one of those people who ought to be a fanzine fan. Although I saw the "premieres" of such things as the Lone Ranger (back when there were six or seven of them and the game was to figure out which one was the Lone Ranger) and the Big Red Cheese in serial form, I think one of my really nostalgic favorites--and I'll admit a little shamefacedly that it was really far from good even by serial standards--was ole heavy Barton Maclane in The Purple Monster Strikes.

I think Margolin is being overly cute quibbling with Deckinger about whether a half-slip and bra do or do not constitute undies. I mean hell.

You ought to get some kind of prize or something for publishing Castillo's stupid little missive. The quote from Boggs is rather fuggheaded too--did he really say that? /No he didn't. Really. Check Castillo again and you'll find that he refers to Boggs only in passing. The quote he gives is a quote from a letter of his own sent to Lucky Bill Donaho./ Gee fellows, don't enjoy yourselves and don't talk about minor things--get in there and discuss how to save the world--don't do anything about it, you understand, but discuss it to hell because I mean, hell, it's important and you have to discuss it or you're just wasting time. I wonder if you've met Art yet, incidentally? /Not yet./

Honestly, the more I think about it, the more I think that sentence deserves some sort of prize for fannish literate double-talk. Christ. "Critical evaluation of its fundamentals" I mean--Christ. I'm speechless. /You ain't read nothin' yet!/.

Oh well, several of us have done Art a good one -- we voted for him in the FAPAC poll as "best new fan of the year." Which should croggle him sufficiently. Oh well, a very enjoyable issue, more than bearing out the promise shown by the first three.

lewis forbes

(2140 N. Kitley Avenue, Indianapolis 18, Indiana)
Received XERO 4, XERO Comics, and FLYER 1 yesterday, much to my delight and surprise. Delight because what I've read so far I've enjoyed; surprise because I have been my usual punctual self in writing letters of comment.

Your editorial pleased me no end. Boiled down it says "this is my zine and I'll damn well publish anything I damn well like." This is an attitude I would enjoy even more in some of the professionals, slick, high-circulation, scared-stiff stuff which wanders into my home on occasion. And I'd flip if it showed up on television. Too many advertisers.

Ho for Nth Fandom (I dis-remember the number you assigned yourselves) and sophisticated SerCon (or sophisercon, as someone of fandom's inevitable and incurable abbreviators will call it) (Sophisercon must be articulated with a lisp to be fully appreciated), best of luck. I just hope to God you don't wander off into SaMism, or a bad case of Gernsbackitis. SerCon dredges up memories of my earlier days in fandom which make the word an abomination. Perhaps what fandom needs is an adult approach to serious, constructive fandom. Perhaps, hell. It's the only visible salvation. Too bad you don't have a word for it without the connotations.

Triple Tangents. Donaho. Against my nature, I find myself agreeing (I'd much druther argue). All except on prozines. Here I have no opinions. I stopped buying prozines January of 1960. I don't have room for my books here on Kitley, and Mother, while abiding my present collection of stuff at Oxford St., frowns on any additions. Busby. As Shaw pointed out, Busby derides sophisercon in an article serious, constructive, and sophisticated. Come again, Busby? Shaw. Sounds sound. Sounds logical. Again, I find myself agreeing. All three: well written, interesting, amusing, and thought-provoking. Howbeit, I've been out of fandom so long you lost me on parts. And some of the fanzines I've never HEARD of.

"Some Comments by James Blish With Regard to New Maps of Hell by Kingsley Amis." LOVE short titles like this one. The article was well written, un so weider. Past this, no comment. I don't know enough about the book, never having previously heard of it. /You have been away./

"The Finish Line"...Being an incurable "inveterate Sturgeon reader" (I know that's redundant. It was meant to be.), I enjoyed this disection. Well written, well planned, and DAMN well better be a sequel. /Yep./

"Next Week"...This is the first sense-worthy explanation of what killed serials. However, my movie-going, like my comic-book-buying was limited by my parents, who were trying (successfully) to inculcate a love of books in me.

The letter col was one of the best parts of the zine. I have a few individual comments to make, but first, your 8 (plus 2) page limit policy seems a good idea. It will allow adequate egoboo and discussion, without becoming one of those monsters in which a lettercol has a magazine. It may improve the quality of letter you get --people who write to hear their typers rattle might limit some of their verbosity in fear of being left out. /Even with our 8 pages stretched to 10 or 11 we find ourselves leaving out good letters. Sincere regrets and like that, but as Dick said in XERO 4, the limited lettercol, while far from ideal, seems the least objectionable of the courses open to us./ This particular set of letters were all good. I wish to God something like this would show up in the Post, say. Then I might be inveigled into reading that magazine.

So much for the isagoge, onward now with an expression we hope denotes vast wisdom and courage.

Wollheim--fandom might be described as a way of life. Fans are sure as Hell one particular type of people. And even if fandom isn't a wayoflife, it is a way of recreation. What makes a fan is a damn good question, reminiscent of the debates on a definition of science fiction in the old pulps.

Gene DeWeese--I'd love to see a Tom Stratten version of some of the Government Issue drivel that creeps sludgishly into my office. You could start with a form 1040, and sink from there into the morass of Army Purchase Orders. On taking fandom seriously, the Fandom is the Only Salvation of Mankind bunch leave me feeling like I'd just escaped from a Rosicrucian meeting. But it all depends on what you mean by taking fandom seriously. If you mean

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A fan who does not love science-fiction is like a man without a soul. --Sam Moskowitz
++

devoting all your time, talents, and love to it, if you mean making a career of it, no thanks. If you mean enjoying it, and working at it, I have done this, and it looks like I'm getting interested again. I enjoyed actifandom before I gafiated. If my newly reacquired interest grows, I may again enjoy devloting some of the time left over from job, family, and studies. But it still ain't no profession.

Don Thompson--the comments on Garrett's writing are a beautiful piece of wordsmanship, and appropriate. And as far as television--occasionally one of the local stations will goof and stage a concert, or schedule a worthwhile play from one of the networks. They do this with abject apologies. We get the Huntley-Brinkley Report, and a DAMN few other news features. The rest is drivel: drool of the first water. I don't have a set. Every once in a while I watch a show or two on my folks or Judy's folks set; this reminds me why I shouldn't get one.

As for XERO Comics: The artwork in this section is the best in the book /Are you listening, Maggie?/. The attitude toward the subject (nostalgic, informative, and more than slightly tongue-in-cheek) makes what could have been a very boring article interesting. As for how long this kick will last: someday you're going to run out of characters to write articles about.

I was a trifle young and innocent when Wonder Woman passed under my eyes. Anyway, I never recognized it as lesbian pornography. Seems a shame, too. Now that I look back, she was a trifle off-color. /More than a trifle, when you look at the old WW stuff with an, ah, shall we say "sophisercon" eye. More than a trifle./

Bhob Stewart
(237 E. 10 Street, New York 14, New York)
DEAD OF NIGHT: In the mirror story the man was not driven mad by the vision in the mirror; he was becoming the madman who had originally owned the mirror. The other room seen in the mirror was not non-existent but was the madman's room.

I do not recall any "gold incident". There was, however, one story supplied for comedy relief, featuring, I think, Alan Mowbray. /All from a little one-letter typo./ It takes place on a gold course; one of the golfers, distressed with losing his game, turns toward the lake and walks into water until only his hat is floating on top. Fadeout. An almost surrealistic shot with the actor's back to the camera and no cutting or camera moves.

The opening sequence was one about a man lying in bed. He sees the sky darken outside, goes to window, watches hearse pull up...the coachman, two stories below, suddenly turns, look straight at the man, and says "There's room for one more inside." Very Bergmanish. Next day, man goes to catch bus, bus conductor has coachman's face...says identical line so man decides not to board. Bus goes half a block and crashes off an embankment. Most notable thing about this sequence is that the premonition was presented realistically, not as a dream or trance. This added a chilling effect which lifted it somewhat above alcoapresentsmundanity.

The thread that held all the sequences together was a story in which a man arrives at a party of people whom he has never met, but has the feeling that he knows them all. They laugh at him, and each in turn tells of a supernatural incident that happened to him. Between stories the man predicts small incidents which later happen and finally concludes that he knows all of these people from his dreams. After the telling of the final incident, the ventriloquist story, there is a great spine-tingling montage which recaps the highlights out of all the stories, and the man finds himself awake in bed. He tells his wife he is going to a party in the country, and the final shot shows him arriving once again to meet the people who told the stories. It leaves you, of course, with the impression that you are seeing a dream which will continue until eternity since he wakes up each morning into the same dream.

I resent Bob Lichtman's passing slur at EC fandom. When Ted White, Larry Stark, and I combined to put out POTRZEBIE we visualized a fanzine which made a critical appraisal of the EC comics as literature. (And I even sent a copy to ole Dock Wertham who had claimed that the comic books had no such critics.) What little response there was consisted mostly of a handful of crayon-scribbled notes thanking us for sending them the first issue. We abandoned the project in disgust feeling that we were fighting a lost cause in the same way EC itself was.

/Ah, you should see a few of the letters that come asking for XERO Comics. You have seen some, in fact, Bhob. But you must have failed to make contact, or else a group now exists that did not exist in POTRZEBIE's day, because the gratifying majority of letters dealing with comics are from adults; second most, from adolescents (that's what we used to call teenagers, remember?); and only a half dozen or so from kids./

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That wraps up XERO's second letter section under the 8-page limit; for the second time it's actually run to 11 pages. Ahweel, those who didn't make it, please do not feel unappreciated. You really are. Appreciated, I mean, not un-. As for a request for a "We Also Heard From" section to "prove" that everybody's letter is read and appreciated...well, you have my word. If that is insufficient, I'm afraid there's not much I can do for you.

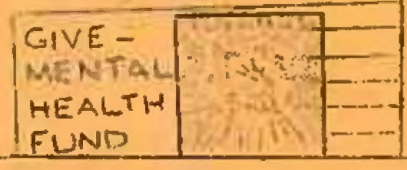
Thanks, and please keep writing,

Pat

Absolute XERO

XERO'S GUEST EDITORIALIST
IS BACK -- WITH ANOTHER
VITAL MESSAGE FOR US ALL.

Art Castillo
22 w 89th St
NYC 24



No, haven't gotten XERO but can well anticipate the attitude. I have no intention of telling you how to run your magazine. I merely comment in passing that there is a good deal of difference between a quality magazine that publishes material which is both interesting and has **something** to say and a Sunday Supplement which publishes items simply because they are "interesting". The latter phenomenon is simply part of that relativistic dadaism (of which LIFE is the outstanding example) into which Western culture is rapidly disintegrating. Dwight McDonald or G. Legman, for instance, can write interestingly about comic books but they have something to say about comic books...in context...against a background with a specific hierarchy of social values. Would you ask me to contribute to "True Confessions" or "Men's Sweat" because a certain level of mentality found them "interesting"? Oh, come now. Mature your definition a little bit & maybe I'll reconsider... Cheers,

Art Castillo

XERO